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BY

LYMAN ABBOTT

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They seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after
him, and find him, though he be not far from
every one of us; for in him we live,
and move, and have our being

Bent

PREFACE

IN an interesting essay on America reprinted in "Littell's Living Age" for February 12, 1910, G. Lowe Dickinson thus characterizes the American spirit:

"In all this continent, I thought, in all the western world, there is not a human soul whose will seeks any peace at all, least of all the peace of God. All move, but about no centre; they move on, to more power, to more wealth, to more motion. There is not one of them who conceives that he has a place, if only he could find it, a rank and order fitted to his nature, higher than some, lower than others, but right and the only right for him, his true position in the cosmic scheme, his ultimate relation to the Power whence it proceeds."

There is truth in this description, but the description is not the whole truth.

There are a great many Americans whom this paragraph aptly describes. They are seeking satisfaction, not in finding their right place, but in finding a higher or what they think is a better place. But it is not true that "there is not one of them who conceives that he has a place fitted to his nature, right and the only right for him." If this were true there would be no religion in America; for religion consists in seeking to find our true relation to God the centre of life, and so to our fellow-men. The object of this book is to help those who are, consciously or unconsciously, seeking for this centre and for their own true orbit and place, and so for peace, — the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

The chapters of this book were originally delivered as addresses at different times and without any purposed relation to each other. They are here brought together because a common theme connects them and a common spirit animates them. Their independent origin accounts for some repetitions, of thought if not of

form, which, if they had been originally written for publication in book form, would probably have been avoided.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

CORNWALL ON HUDSON, N.Y.
March, 1910.

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I

THE SOUL'S QUEST AFTER GOD

I

THE SOUL'S QUEST AFTER GOD[1]

THE experience of personal communion with God is as universal as the human race. Appreciation of the divine presence is more common than appreciation of art, music, or literature. Men and women who do not respond to music, see no beauty in pictures, never read, and could not understand literature if it were read to them, yet find comfort in sorrow, strength in temptation, courage in danger, and added joy in their enjoyments from the sense of a Father's presence. In all climates and countries, among all races and in all epochs, under all creeds and theologies, this experience of communion with the Eternal is seen. He is addressed by many names, many and inconsistent conceptions of him are formed; the lan-

[1] Copyright, 1897, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

guage is sometimes that of dread, sometimes that of reverence, sometimes that of hope and trust and love. But whatever the language, whatever the phase of experience, faith in the reality of the fellowship inspires the prayer. To believe that there is no fellowship is to disbelieve in the trustworthiness of a substantially universal though multiform human consciousness. To deny the reality of such fellowship is to deny the common witness of mankind in all ages and of all types.

This little book assumes the trustworthiness of universal human experience. It assumes that God is, and that some men have communion with him. It is addressed to those who believe, or wish to believe, in God, who believe, or wish to believe, that the soul of man can have communion with him, but who either have no such communion themselves, or in whose experience it is so broken, interrupted, and desultory as to leave them a prey to doubts whether it is a reality or a fantasy. This book is not written to prove either that God is, or that the soul

can hold communion with him. It is written to aid those who see, and desire to see more clearly; or who have seen, and desire to renew their sight; or who have heard the testimony of those who see, and wish to believe that testimony true, and to enjoy a similar vision. It assumes in the reader a desire to know God, or to know him better; a desire like that of Abraham when he followed a mystic voice which called him out of the land of idolatry to find God in a strange land he knew nothing of; like that of Moses when in the wilderness he cried out, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" like that of Job when in his darkness, tortured by the injustice of his friends, the unfaith of his wife, and his own doubts, he cried out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat;" like that of Elijah when in despair he looked upon the fire, tempest, and earthquake at Mount Horeb, and so was prepared to hear the still, small voice within; like that of Philip saying to the Master, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth

us;" like that of the Athenians erecting an altar to the unknown God, because all idols, temples, and priests had failed to satisfy their quest; like that of Paul when life and death, principalities and powers, things present and things to come, had vainly endeavored to turn him aside, and who in his finding of God's love declared himself victor over them all. For such, by one who seeks to clarify and confirm his own faith as well as that of others, this book is written to point out, first, some of the hindrances to be overcome; second, some of the aids which promote success in the soul's quest after God.

I. HINDRANCES

If the consciousness of God is possible to all healthful souls, why are so many men and women without this consciousness? There are men and women, not a few, who do not want God. They would be very glad to have God if he were always on their side; glad to have God if he would always do what they want him to do. But a supreme will,

a masterful will, a will to which they must conform, they do not want. They do not like to retain God in their knowledge, says Paul; they put God far from them, says the Psalmist. The same spirit of anarchism which leads some men to desire to be rid of human law leads other men to desire to be rid of divine law. Not long ago a body of anarchists in Chicago passed a resolution saying in effect, and very nearly in words, "We have no use for God." So Bakunin, the Russian anarchist, says substantially, "We want no laws, either human or divine." The first question of the soul, then, must be this, Do I really want God to rule over me? Do I want a supreme will in the universe, to which my will must in every respect be conformed? Do I want a will superior to my own, in the shop, in the factory, in society, at the ballot-box, in the home?

There are many men, and a large number, who, though they do not wish to be rid of God, do not very much care to have him. They are not opposed to

God; but neither are they anxious about knowing him. The Psalmist speaks of these when he says, "God is not in all their thoughts." There are thousands of men and women of whom that is true. They live their lives without thought of God. Sometimes God is forced into their thoughts by his providence; sometimes he is flashed before their thoughts by a sermon or a book; but, for the most part, they are living with thoughts fixed on other things. The kingdom they are working for is not the kingdom of God; the name they are hallowing is not the name of God; the will they are trying to do is not the will of God. They are busy about other things. One man is busy after his wealth — he is a honey-gatherer; another after his pleasure; another after his fame; another about nothing — and he is busiest of all. But neither is taken up with God. They do not know what is the meaning of the experience, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." They are not eager to know God;

they are not anxious to be friends with him. They lie awake at night over business anxieties, over earthly disappointments, over the sundering of human friendships; but they never lie awake at night over the absence of God. That ploughs no furrow on the brow, traces no line in the cheek, brings no gray hair to the head. On the whole, they are well satisfied without God.

Nor are these men all sensual self-seekers. Some of them are what we call good men, followers after truth, practisers of righteousness. But the invisible and the eternal world does not attract them; their thoughts do not run in that direction. The spiritual vision may be lost by non-use, as any other faculty may be lost. They who have not looked for anything back of phenomena, who have only been searching the phenomena, and ticketing and classifying them, will find only what they look for. Such men sometimes feel the sadness and the loneliness of a Godless life; sometimes the question arises in their hearts whether it is worth while to

know the stars, the flowers, the rocks, the trees, the bones, the arteries, if there is no Spirit behind them all, no God in them all, no love using them all. Says one of these men, Professor Clifford of England: —

"It cannot be doubted that theistic belief is a comfort and a solace to those who hold it, and that the loss of it is a very painful loss. It cannot be doubted, at least, by many of us in this generation, who either profess it now, or received it in our childhood, and have parted from it since with such searching trouble as only cradle-faiths can cause. We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven, to light up a soulless earth; we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead. Our children, it may be hoped, will know that sorrow only by the reflex light of a wondering compassion." [1]

Heartrending is this testimony of a truly noble, genuine, pure-minded man to the loss of the capacity to perceive the Infinite in the finite, the Divine behind the human, the Invisible behind the visible.

[1] W. K. Clifford's Lectures and Essays, p. 389.

Sometimes this voluntary blindness, this having eyes and seeing not, and having ears and hearing not, is formulated into a philosophy. The man who has lost the power of vision declares that there is no vision; the man who has lost the power of hearing declares that there is no hearing; the man whose heart does not throb to the pulsation of music says that there is no music; the man whose eyes see no beauty in a picture declares there is no art; the man who has lost, from non-use, the capacity to perceive and recognize the Divine and the Infinite declares that there is not in man the capacity to perceive the Divine and the Infinite. "Truly," says Mr. Huxley, speaking of religious faith, "on this topic silence is golden; while speech reaches not even the dignity of sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, and is but the weary clatter of an endless logomachy."[1] That is the philosophy of non-use of faculty coined into a system. The adequate answer to it is furnished by Victor Hugo: —

[1] Essay on Hume, p. 183.

"There is, we are aware, a philosophy that denies the infinite. There is also a philosophy, classed pathologically, which denies the sun; this philosophy is called blindness. To set up a sense we lack as a source of truth, is a fine piece of blind man's assurance. And the rarity of it consists in the haughty air of superiority and compassion which is assumed towards the philosophy that sees God, by this philosophy that has to grope its way. It makes one think of a mole exclaiming: 'How they excite my pity with their prate about a sun!'"[1]

This loss of vision from non-use, this atrophy of the spiritual faculty, is a very common hindrance to the perception of God in our materialistic and scientific age. For the man who does not want God of course will not find him; and the man who is busy searching for something else will not find God; and certainly the man who has coined the atrophy of faculty into a philosophy that the Eternal and the In-

[1] *Les Misérables*, "Cosette," p. 133. — Victor Hugo. Curiously, Mr. Huxley uses the same simile, though he applies it only to men who do not see ethical laws, not to men who do not see the invisible spirit in nature or in man. See his *Hume*, pp. 239, 240.

visible cannot be seen or known, cannot see or know.

Besides these, are many men who believe that there is a God, and yet live without any companionship with God, because they have taken in place of God what is divinely intended only to bring them to him. We think that we have gotten rid of idolatry because we no longer worship painted or carved images, as though these were the only idols. Men at first use a symbol as a means of enabling them to apprehend the reality, and then stop with the symbol, and accept it in lieu of the reality. The image is put up as a means of interpreting God to men; then men content themselves with the image, and leave God unknown. Is there nothing analogous to that in Christian experience? In the same way, one generation has constructed a creed, and another generation has substituted belief in the creed for a living faith in a living God. Belief in the Apostle's Creed, in the Nicene Creed, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, in the Thirty-Nine Articles, has

taken the place of faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. Other men have gone behind the creed, and said, "We believe in the church which made the creed;" or behind the church to the Bible, and said, "We are not sure whether we believe in the creed, we are not quite sure whether we believe in the church; but one thing we do know, we believe in" — what? God? No — "we believe in the Bible;" and they stop there. Some men are content with the creed; other men are content with the church; other men are content with the Book. But in either case they stop at the eidolon, — the image, the symbol. So long as the creed is a window, and we see God through it, it is good; so long as the church is a voice, and we hear it saying, "Come to God," it is good; so long as the Bible is a collection of voices, every one saying, "God tabernacles among men," and we look in our own heart and find God there, it is good. But when men are content simply to believe in the creed, or in the church, or in the Bible, they are worshipping idols. It is not the Bible, it

is not the church, it is not the creed; it is God — the living God, who spake in the hearts of men of olden time. Why? In order that we might hear the same voice speaking in our hearts to-day. But when men stop with the eidolon, God slips out of their thought. Gideon destroys the idol that has been erected to the worship of Baal, and puts up an altar without any idol, that he may worship the spirit of Jehovah. The people think him irreligious, and would at first kill him. It has always been so. This process of idol destruction has gone on in all ages of the world, and will go on until God has taught us that only God can satisfy, — not a testimony about God, not a report of God, not witnesses to God, not a belief concerning God, but only God himself, can satisfy. The creed has been allowed to take the place of the living God; then prophets have arisen to attack the creed; and orthodoxy has thought faith was being destroyed, and has come to its rescue. But, in reality, a mere symbol of faith was being destroyed, that faith might be born again.

Then the church has been allowed to take the place of the living God; and again prophets have arisen to attack the church; and again orthodoxy has thought faith was being destroyed, and has come to its rescue. But, in fact, only the idol was being destroyed, that faith, a living faith in a living God, might rise again from the tomb in which it was buried. Then gradually an infallible Book has been substituted for an infallible church; and belief in an infallible Book has been made to take the place of faith in a living God. And again prophets have arisen with their message that belief in the Book is no substitute for a living faith in a living God; that the Book is but the testimony of fallible men to the living God. And again we encounter the fear that faith is being destroyed. It is the substitution of a Book for the living God which is being destroyed. We are learning that we must look, not to the creed, but through the creed; not to the church, but through the church; and not even to the Bible, but through the Bible, to the living God, or we cannot see God.

Men fail to find God because they curiously reverse the position — the natural, legitimate, rightful position — between the soul and God. There is a word common in theology, though not very familiar in ordinary intercourse, — theodicy, which means justifying the ways of God to man. When a man begins to justify the ways of God to man, he has entered on a very dangerous process. For example, it is said, "If there is a God, he must be omnipotent and omniscient; and an omnipotent and omniscient God could and would make a world without sin and without suffering; but the world is not without sin nor without suffering, therefore there is no God." Such a man frames in his own mind his notion of what a God must be, and then brings God himself to that standard, and measures him by it. Theodicy! Justifying the ways of God to man! Sit, my soul, on the judgment throne, and summon God to stand before thee. "Now, Almighty One, I will see whether thou art righteous. Why didst thou allow famine in India? What right

hast thou to allow a deluge in Japan? What right hast thou to allow man to go to war with his fellow-man in Europe? Justify thyself; explain thyself; answer for thyself." No man will ever find his way to the heart of God in that spirit.

Men who do want God, who are really in earnest to find God, who do not live in the outward world altogether, but have some vision of the inner, who do not stop at the creed or the church or the Book, who do not call God to an account for the way in which he conducts himself, still fail to find God because they want God only for what God will bring to them. This is the most common cause of failing to find God in the spiritual experience of men and women. They do not want God for himself. They want him for something he is going to bring them. "I want peace," one cries, "and so I want God." "I want prosperity," another cries, "and so I want God." "I want joy," cries another, "and therefore I want God." What man can find his way to the heart of a woman if he wants her for the fortune she will

bring? Whether it be fortune of houses and lots, or fortune of pleasures and joys, if all his love for her is only the reflex of love for himself, he will never find her. She may marry him; he may have her for a wife; but he will never know her. So God will be loved for his own sake. The fortune-hunter never finds him. We think we want God. Do we? If God brings tears, humiliation, poverty, do we want him? Or do we want peace and joy and prosperity? Our question must be, not, Can I have God's help in my business, but, Can God have my help in his business? Not whether we can get God on our side, but whether we are willing to be on God's side. Do we want God for his own sake? It is true that wisdom has wealth in the one hand and pleasure in the other, that her ways are ways of pleasantness, her paths are paths of peace; but she will never come to one who follows her for the sake of the wealth in the one hand or the pleasure in the other. No man will find God unless he seeks after God for God's own sake, loves him for him-

self, and not for the gifts which he may bestow.

Devout seekers after God are not infrequently separated from him by sorrow. It is said that sorrow brings one to God. So it sometimes does. But it sometimes estranges from God. Great sorrow often makes it seem for the time as though life were unjust, and there were no God ruling in the universe. This is a very common experience. It was the experience of Job in his distress, of the Psalmist in his exile, of Paul in his struggle with life and death, and principalities and powers, and things present and things to come. It was in the experience of the Master himself when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If when we look out upon life and see its travail of pain, or when the anguish of life enters our own soul and embitters it, the sun sometimes seems blotted out of the heavens, and God seems gone, we are not to chide ourselves; we are to remember that our experience of temporary oblivion of the Almighty is an experience which the devout in all

ages have known. Wait thou his time. Blessed is he who in such an hour of sorrow, when it seems as though God were departing, still holds to him, and cries, "*My* God! *my* God!"

Finally, God is infinite and we are finite; and, at the best, we can only know him a very little. Many young people make a mistake in this respect. They read the story of devout souls in the Psalms, or in biographies in the Bible or in other literature, and say, "I have no such experience as that; I cannot be a Christian." It takes time to grow, and the power of seeing God is a power that must grow like any other power. We cannot expect at fifteen all that we may have at fifty; nor at fifty all that we may have in the glory of the future. One of the best educated, one of the most spiritually developed, one of the richest natures that God has ever given to the world, said of himself, "We see in part, and we prophesy in part," and "we see in a glass darkly." If you do not care for God, if you think you can get along without him,

if you are satisfied to live as you are, then you may very well question whether you are living at all. If you think you have all of God you need, if you are satisfied with your vision of God, if you have all the experience that your heart craves, then you may doubt whether you are really living. But if you know what it is to cry, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so my soul panteth after thee, O God!" if you know what it is to cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" if every glimpse of God makes you long for a better vision, and every imperfect and tardy acquiescence in God's will makes you long for the time when you will do his will on earth as the angels do it in heaven, — "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." I cannot take all the sunlight; but shall I not bask in what sunlight I can get on a spring morning? I cannot breathe all the oxygen; but shall I not stand at the open window, and take great draughts of oxygen, as much as my lungs will hold? I cannot see all the floral

beauty of this beautiful world; but shall I not look at this bunch of lilies, and enjoy them? I cannot take in all of God; shall I not walk in such light as he gives, breathe in such breath of life as he imparts, rejoice in such beauty of love as he affords?

Look at these etchings as they stand, my reader, and ask yourself the question, Is your portrait here? Do you really want God? or would you rather be glad to know there is no will superior to your own? Do you want him above everything else, so that no wealth, nor power, nor fame counts in comparison with the desire for God? Do you want God, and not an intellectual opinion about him, or a testimony to him, or a church service of adoration of him, or even a Book written concerning him? Do you want God for his own sake, and not for the happiness you think he will bring you either here or hereafter? Do you want him as your comforter in sorrow, your strength in temptation, your guide in perplexity, your life, your all and in all? If you do not, the

second part of this little book is not for you. If you do, then will I try to tell you, as well as a half-healed blind man can tell other half-healed blind men, how we can see something of God.

II. HELPS

We can form the habit of looking for God in nature.

It is only a very superficial acquaintance with scientific thought which leads to the idea that there is no God in nature. The old argument from designs has given place to the modern argument from design. The evidence of personal skill in nature is by no man more strikingly witnessed to than by such representatives of modern scientific exploration as Darwin, Tyndall, and Huxley. Read in Darwin's *Life and Letters* his recognition of infinite design in the great fabric of creation; or Huxley's wonderfully graphic description in his essay on "The Origin of the Species"[1] of the development of some common

[1] *Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews*, p. 260.

animal such as a salamander or a newt from its egg, and his conclusion: "After watching the process hour by hour, one is almost involuntarily possessed by the notion, that some more subtle aid to vision than an achromatic would show the hidden artist, with his plan before him, striving with skilful manipulation to perfect his work." Or read Professor Tyndall's[1] testimony to his own experience: "I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and vigor that this doctrine [of material atheism] commends itself to my mind; that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell, and of which we form a part." He who does not care to find God will not have God forced upon his attention by nature. But he who does, may learn to discern the infinite wisdom manifesting itself in all natural phenomena. "There are," says James Martineau,[2]

[1] *Fragments of Science*, vol. ii. p. 204.
[2] *A Study of Religion*, vol. i. p. 336.

"but three forms under which it is possible to think of the ultimate or immanent principle of the universe, — Mind, Life, Matter: given the first, it is intellectually thought out: the second, it blindly grows: the third, it mechanically shuffles into equilibrium." Whatever intellectual, or even moral, difficulties one may find involved in a theistic conception of the universe, however unsatisfactory the old mechanical conception of creation, and the old semi-idolatrous conception of God as a gigantic man, fulfilling the part now of mechanic and now of engineer, no thoughtful student of nature can hesitate between these alternatives: it is clear that nature has been thought out. The object of science is, or ought to be, not merely to describe phenomena, and to label and assort them, but to perceive their intellectual relations; and that is to perceive the Infinite Intellect which has prearranged them, and is revealed in and by them. Science thinks the thoughts of God after him. It is possible to form the habit of looking for evidences of wisdom, skill,

æsthetic love of beauty, general beneficence in the ordered phenomena of nature. One will see what he looks for. In the same field the farmer will see food for cattle; the artist flowers for his canvas; the scientist mechanical contrivances for his analytical dissection; the devout soul witnesses of a life greater, wiser, better than his own. He may cultivate the habit of the Hebrew Psalmist. If he does, what he will learn in time to see and hear in nature will be what that Psalmist saw and heard: —

"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters:
The God of glory thundereth,
Even the Lord upon many waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful;
The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars;
Yea, the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He maketh them also to skip like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.
The voice of the Lord cleaveth the flames of fire.
The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness;
The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,
And strippeth the forests bare:
And in his temple everything saith, Glory."

We may form a similar habit of looking for God in man. "He," says John, "that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This would be a strange *non sequitur*, if God were not to be seen in men. There is a divine in humanity, obscured, alloyed, corrupted; but still it is there. For where love is, there God is; and in all the revelations of love there is a revelation of God, who is himself the fountain of love. To this, Browning has given beautiful expression, though his enigmatic verse will not yield its meaning to the mere careless reader: —

"Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks, — life and love with these!
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
All the long lone summer day, that greenwood life of ours!

"Rich-pavilioned, rather, — still the world without, —
Inside — gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about!
Queen it thou on purple, — I, at watch and ward
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard!

"So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should
souls have place."

Optimism and piety walk the world together. This is but another way of saying that hope and faith are kin. If to be without God is to be without hope, it is scarcely less true, to be without hope is to be without God. He who looks for the worst in men will not be without belief in a personal devil; he who looks for the best in men will not be without faith in a personal God. A wealthy lady, who had a beautiful rural home in the vicinity of one of our great cities, invited to it one day the outcast of the neighboring city. They roamed her lawns, visited her conservatory, swarmed through her gardens. At parting, a rough, raw-boned Irishwoman said to her, in a voice which for depth, but not for smoothness, would have done credit to a basso, "Mrs. ——, I guess the Lord Jesus put this into your head, did n't he?" — "I think he did,"

was the reply. "I thought so," was the unconsciously humorous response; "I knew you could n't have thought of it yourself." But humorous though it was, it expressed a profound truth. The higher thoughts come to us and to our fellows. He who will look in life for its heroisms, its self-denials, its unselfish services, will find faith in a personal God stealing into his heart, he scarce knows how. He will find himself saying to himself, all unconsciously, "God put this into your heart; you could n't have thought of it yourself."

In this quest after God, whether in the world of nature or the world of men, most of us need, as in other quests after knowledge, a guide, a teacher. Few men know how to see accurately material things, fewer still how to perceive spiritual realities, until they have been shown. There are men who have developed with patient assiduity the capacity to examine the outer world, for whose guidance we should be profoundly grateful, — Tyndall, Huxley, Darwin, Agassiz, and hosts of others. There

are other men who have developed the gift of seeing the invisible world; and when we cannot see with our less-developed vision, why should we not accept their witness, and under their guidance learn to see as they see? The testimony of the scientists to life is not to be discarded; but neither is the testimony of the poets. Imagination is also a capacity to see; and the poet is also an explorer. Wordsworth will tell us how to see God in nature; and Browning how to see God in men; and Whittier how to see God in our own souls. There is in the autobiography of Charles Darwin a pathetic passage in which, with characteristic candor, he laments the atrophy of his own imagination and his spiritual nature, and accounts for it. He says:[1] —

"Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure; and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare,

[1] *Life and Letters of Darwin*, vol. i. pp. 81, 82.

especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry; I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures and music. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts; but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. A man with a mind more highly organized or better constituted than mine, would not, I suppose, have thus suffered; and if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry, and listen to some music, at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

He who would see God must use the faculty with which God is seen; and if he

would do this, he must let men who are rich in the faculty which perceives the invisible, — which looks not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen and are eternal, — guide, teach, inspire him. Paul has given this counsel in four sentences, which are not the disconnected aphorisms they are sometimes taken to be: "Quench not the spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good!" Which may be liberally rendered thus: Do not extinguish the spiritual nature within you, by suffering that part of your powers to be atrophied. Despise not the men who live in the invisible world, and bear testimony out of their experience to the things which they have seen and known. Yet take not all utterances of all prophets as of equal authority; test them. And such as prove in the trial beneficent, by animating human life, and making it nobler and better, to those hold fast; that is the test, — by their fruits ye shall know them.

In this quest after God in human life

we must, as I have said, seek for the divine in the human; for the gold in the ore; for the flowers among the weeds. But there is one life in which that divine was not corrupted by the human, though dwelling in it. It would be foreign to the purpose of this book to attempt to afford a theological definition of Jesus Christ. One may believe that he was God and man dwelling together in a dual personality; or God in human flesh, the divine spirit dwelling under the limitations of bodily existence; or God-in-man, the divine Spirit so animating the man Christ Jesus as to make him a God-filled man; or one may decline to define his faith, believing that Christ transcends all definition. But he can hardly read with unprejudiced mind the story of that wonderful life, and not find in it a marvellous revelation of the nature of God. He who would find God will find him, as nowhere else, in the earthly life of Jesus the Christ. Let him for the purpose read and re-read the story of that life, and think that the Father is, in the infinite and eternal rela-

tions, what Jesus Christ was in the temporary and limited ones. Would he know how God feels toward us in our sorrow, let him read the story of Christ's visit to the sisters of Lazarus; toward the sceptic in his unbelief, let him read the story of Jesus and Thomas; toward the recreant disciple who has been unfaithful, let him read the interview between Christ and Peter by the Galilean Sea; toward the penitent sinner, outcast and despairing, let him read the story of Christ's pardon of the woman who was a sinner; toward the men who use religion as a cloak for self-service, let him read Christ's denunciation of the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers. And then before a God thus interpreted, let him come in his sorrow for comfort; in his doubts for better, clearer light; in his penitence for pardon; in his despair for a new courage; and in his pride for condemnation. In doing this we may take either one of the many figures by which the New Testament writers interpret Christ to us. We may think of

him as the Christ of God, — that is, as the One whom God has anointed and sent into the world to reveal the unknown and make Him known ; or as the Son of God, — that is, as One who possesses the Father's nature, and so discloses it to us that we may become sons of God ; or as the Image of God, — that is, a picture of the Invisible and the Eternal cast upon the sensitive-plate of a pure and holy life ; or, laying aside all figures, we may simply accept Christ's words, and build upon them, " Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." The one thing important for him who is seeking God is to seek to find him in Jesus Christ, as he has sought to find him in nature, in humanity, and in the experience of the prophetic and devout souls portrayed in literature. He who thus seeks will find him in Jesus Christ, with a clearness of disclosure found nowhere else.

But we must look for God in Christ not only by reading about Christ, but by endeavoring to be like him. It is only by participation in his life that we can

come to an acquaintance with him. Not so much by studying the life of Christ as by endeavoring to live it, do we come into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. If it is true that we shall be like him when we see him as he is, it is also true that we can see him as he is, only as we are like him. There is one utterance of Paul in which the two different translations, that of the Old Version and that of the Revised Version, bring out this distinction very clearly: —

Old Version. — We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

Revised Version. — We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

It is not by beholding as in a glass, it is by reflecting as from a mirror, that the transformation comes; and with the transformation, acquaintance, friendship.

II

GOD IN NATURE

II

GOD IN NATURE[1]

WE are to discriminate clearly between theology and religion, between life and the philosophy of life. My object this morning is not to expound a complete system of philosophy, but to consider the effect of the change which is taking place in philosophy upon the religious life.

The object of the minister is not to expound philosophy, but to promote life. He is not a teacher of theology, but a preacher of religion. He must be a theologian; he must have a philosophy of the life which he is imparting; nevertheless, his object is not to impart the philosophy, but to use the philosophy that he may impart the life. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it

[1] Copyright, 1899, by Lyman Abbott. Copyright, 1900, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

more abundantly," says Christ. And then he breathes upon his disciples and says, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." We who are ministers of his grace are to be administers of his life. We are to impart life. We are to do this through truth; nevertheless, for his ministers truth is not an end, but a means to an end. Truth is instrumental.

The teacher in the medical school teaches physiology and anatomy and hygiene; but when we get sick and send for a doctor, we do not send in order that we may receive a lecture on physiology or anatomy or hygiene. We send for the doctor that he may use his knowledge of physiology or anatomy or hygiene to make us well. You break a bone; you do not want the doctor to tell you about bones, you want him to set the bone. So the object of ministers is not to lecture us on the philosophy of religion; neither is it to ignore the philosophy of religion; it is to use the philosophy of religion to help men and women to live better, nobler,

diviner lives. "The truth," says Christ, "shall make you free." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Truth is, then, an instrument. The object of truth is to set men free; it is to sanctify men, to make them holy.

The minister who simply expounds the truth does not understand his mission. His mission is so to use truth that men shall be made free; that men shall be made holy. His ministry is, therefore, to be determined by fruits in the life. That is the best sermon, not which is a great pulpit effort, but which is helpful. If, young men, you have preached a sermon and some one comes up to you and says that was a great pulpit effort, hide your head in shame and go home and never write another like it. But if some one comes to you, with a little quaver in the voice and a little moisture in the eye, and says, "Thank you; you have helped me this morning," thank God and go home and try to write another like it. That is the end of preaching — to use theology to help life. The test of the sermon is its

fruitfulness in life; and that is the test of theology.

We are not, however, to judge of a truth beforehand by the fruit which we think it will produce. It is the truth which makes free, not any kind of error. It is the truth which sanctifies men, not any kind of falsehood. All truth is safe. All error is dangerous. It is only the truth that the minister is to use. He is never to say, "This is the philosophy that my people are used to and this is the philosophy that I think will do better service, and so, though I do not believe it, I will preach it." Never! It is only the *truth* he is to use, but he is always to *use* the truth. Truth is always an instrument.

He is to distinguish, too, between the things he knows and the things he thinks, between certainties and hypotheses. He must have both, both certainties and hypotheses, but he must distinguish in his own mind between the two. It is absolutely certain that there is sunlight, and it is absolutely certain that that sunlight pro-

duces certain vital effects on humanity and vegetation; and it is now the universally accepted hypothesis that the whole universe is filled with an invisible, impalpable ether, and that sunlight is produced by undulations of that ether. The ether is a hypothesis. The sunlight is a certainty. In science we all recognize this distinction between the hypotheses and the certainties. Unfortunately, we have not yet learned in theology to distinguish between the hypotheses and the certainties. We generally quarrel about the hypotheses.

It is, for instance, a certainty, I hope in the experience of all of us, — certainly it must be a certainty in the experience of every minister, or he has no right in the pulpit, — that God is. God is not a hypothesis which the minister has invented to account for the phenomena of creation. He knows that there is a "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," because when he has been weak that power has strengthened him, when he has been a coward that power has made him strong, when he has been in sorrow that power

has comforted him, when he has been in perplexity that power has counselled him, and he has walked a different path, and lived a different life, and been a different man, because there is that power, — impalpable, invisible, unknown, and yet best and most truly known. But when he comes to ask himself for a definition of this power, for an account of its attributes, and its relation to the phenomena about him, he enters at once into the realm of hypothesis. We know God in his personal relation to ourselves. What he is in himself and what he is in his relations to the great universal phenomena, that is matter of hypothesis.

It is about the effect of a new hypothesis on our religious life that I am going to talk to you this morning. I am not going to consider which of two hypotheses is true; I am going to try to describe two hypotheses, and consider their respective effects on the religious life. I will describe them as matters of personal experience; because I find that when I attempt to describe the old theology, some of my

friends, who still hold to it, think I am describing it unjustly and unfairly; I do not wish to describe another man's opinion, because I find it so difficult for other men to describe mine.

As I look back, I can remember something of the view which it seems to me I held when I was entering into the ministry. It was something like this: There is a great and good God. He is somewhere in the centre of the universe — whether in the body or out of the body I knew not, and yet in my conception I embodied him. He is the creator and the ruler of the world. He had made the world. I conceived of him as making the world as an architect makes a building. I rather think somewhere, in some of my earlier sermons, that figure would be found worked out — he had turned it in a lathe; he had erected the pillars; he had woven the carpet of grass; he had ornamented it with the flowers. You have heard that from other ministers, and no doubt you would have heard it from me when I was a young man. And as I conceived of

God creating the world as an engineer creates an engine, so also I conceived of him regulating this world as an engineer regulates the engine. When men said to me, "Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe that God has set aside natural law?" I said, "Oh, no, but he uses natural law. As an engineer uses the steam and the fire, or as an electric engineer uses the electricity, so God uses the forces of nature. He is in his engine, with his hand on the lever; he can add to its speed or he can diminish its speed, or he can halt it, or he can make it go backward, or he can turn it in the one direction or the other direction. He made the engine and he rules the engine." Something like that was my conception of God.

Similarly I conceived of him in his relation to men as a great king. He had issued certain laws, and had attached certain punishments to those laws. There cannot be law without punishment; a law without a penalty attached is only advice, not law. I conceived that God had issued laws, and to them had attached penalties.

Those laws had come from his throne like edicts from an imperial Czar. They were righteous and just laws, and I had broken them, and the whole human race had broken them, and punishment was denounced against the whole human race for breaking them, and that punishment must be executed. And yet God was merciful and wished to spare men. And so his Son had come into the world, and had borne the punishment in order that the law might be carried out and still man might be forgiven. That God might both be just and the justifier of him that believeth, some one had to bear the penalty which had been attached to the law. So I conceived of God as sitting apart from his creation which he had made and ruling it, and apart from men whom he had made and ruling them.

And when I entertained this conception of God as sitting apart from the universe which he had made and ruling it, and apart from men whom he had made and ruling them, it seemed to me that the most fundamental question in theology

was, Do you believe in the supernatural? If a man did not believe in the supernatural, then all he believed in was the machine; he believed in the engine, but he did not think there was any engineer to control it; he believed in humanity, but he did not think there was any king to govern men. And one who believed simply in the engine without any engineer, and in the community without any king, was either an atheist or a deist; that is, either he believed there was no God, or else he believed in an absentee God, in a God who had nothing to do with the world, a God who had nothing to do with men. And it did not seem to me then, and it does not seem to me now, that there is much to choose between the belief in no God and the belief in an absentee God. For religion consists, I recall to you again, not in a hypothesis that there is a God, but in a life lived under the inspiration of God; and if God is conceived as so far off that there is no longer any intercommunication between God and the soul, he is an absentee God,

and life goes on without him. Under that conception there cannot be any vital religion, for religion is the inflowing of God upon life.

"Religion," says Max Müller, "consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man." If, then, God is represented as absent from the universe so that he does not produce any influence on the conduct and character of man, there is no religion.

Gradually my whole conception of the relation of God to the universe has changed. I am sure that I have not lost my experience of God. I am far more certain now than I was forty years ago that God is, and that God is not an absentee God. I am not quite so certain as I once was about some of the manifestations which I once thought he had made of himself. I am a great deal more certain than I once was of his personal relation to me. My experience of God has changed only to grow deeper, broader, and stronger. But my conception of

God's relation to the universe has changed radically. My hypothesis was — God an engineer who had made an engine and sat apart from it, ruling it; God a king who had made the human race and sat apart from men, ruling them. That was my hypothesis; now I have another hypothesis. And I think the change which has come over my mind is coming and has come over the minds of a great many. I think that there is nothing original in what I am going to say to you this morning, for I am only going to interpret to you a change, perhaps not altogether understood, which is being wrought in the mind of the whole Christian Church. I think my change only reflects your change. But whether that be true or not, I am sure the change has taken place in me.

I now conceive of God as in his universe. I conceive of creation as a growth. I conceive of him as making the universe somewhat as our spirit makes our body, shaping and changing and developing it by processes from within. The figures from the finite to the infinite are imper-

fect and misleading, but this is the figure which best represents to me my own thought of God's relation to the universe: Not that of an engineer who said one morning, "Go to, I will make a world," and in six days, or six thousand years, or six million thousand years, made one by forming it from without, as a potter forms the clay with skilful hand; but that of a Spirit who has been forever manifesting himself in the works of creation and beneficence in all the universe, one little work of whose wisdom and beneficence we are and we see.

I look out upon the universe and I see that it is a universe, a variety in unity. I see that there is a unity in all the phenomena of nature, and that science has more and more made that unity clear, and I see that there is one Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed. And I see too, it seems to me very clearly, that this Energy is an intellectual Energy; that is, that the physical phenomena of the universe are intellectually related to one another. The scientist

does not create the relations; he finds them. They are; he discovers them. All science is thinking the thoughts of God after him. It is finding thought where thought has done its intellectual work; it is learning what are those intellectual relationships which have been in and are embodied in creation.

Matthew Arnold says: "There is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." The unity of physical phenomena is not more certain than the unity of moral phenomena. It makes history possible, moral philosophy possible, sociology possible, the study of literature and human life possible. We are each one of us an individual, and yet the nation has its entity and the human race its entity, and we are all one. The seventy millions of people in these United States are not seventy million separated grains of sand; we are an organic nation. These many millions upon this globe, that have inhabited it we know not how long, and are to inhabit it we know not how much longer, are not like the grains of sand

lying upon the ocean beach; we are a unit, with a beginning, with a progress, with a history, with a development, with a moral law that unites and makes us one. As there is, therefore, one power that makes for order in the natural universe, so there is one power that makes for righteousness in the moral universe; and if it makes for righteousness it is a righteous power, as the power that makes for order is an intellectual power. In other words, I have come to believe that in the world of nature and back of all its phenomena, and in the world of men and back of all human phenomena, is one great intellectual and righteous Power manifesting himself in and through the world of nature, manifesting himself in and through the world of men.

Perhaps some one will ask me here, "Do you believe in a personal God?" A reporter of one of the daily papers once came to me; he wanted to make a column of copy for his paper, and he had a long row of questions on the subject of theology. I was bowing him out of the room

with gentle declination when he stopped me, saying: "Oh, but, Mr. Abbott, just one question: Do you believe in a personal God?" "Well," I said, "what do you mean by a personal God?" He said: "I mean a great big man sitting up in the inner circle of the universe, ruling things." "No," I said, "I do not believe in that kind of a personal God." "Oh, well, then," he said, "you are a pantheist." I have long since learned that, if fine words butter no parsnips, hard words break no bones. If my new conception of God were pantheism, and I thought it were true, I hope I should dare to say, I am a pantheist. But it is not pantheism. The difference between saying that God is *in* all nature, and God is nature — the difference between saying that God is *in* all phenomena, and saying that God is simply the sum of all phenomena, seems to me plain enough — even for such a reporter of a daily newspaper to understand. No. I believe that I am in my body, equally regnant in every part of it; but I am sure that I am something more than my body.

I believe that God is in all phenomena, regnant in them all; but I believe that he is something more than the sum of all phenomena. He is more than any manifestation of himself. He is more, therefore, than the sum of all the manifestations of himself.[1]

I am not going this morning to argue for one or the other of these conceptions. I am not going to try to show you that the one is true and the other erroneous. I am going to try to consider with you the difference which this change in conception makes in the religious life. This is the topic which I have been asked to speak on: The relation of nature and the supernatural to the Christian thought of to-day; not to argue philosophically which is true, but to consider practically what is the effect of our changed conceptions on our spiritual life.

[1] A man is no less a person because he can speak in New York and be heard in Chicago, or press a button in Washington and set machinery in motion in Omaha. Extension of power does not lessen the personality of him who exercises it.

In the first place, then, I no longer recognize a distinction between the natural and the supernatural. When I thought that God sat apart from nature, ruling over it as an engineer rules over his engine, then it seemed to me to be of essential importance that one should believe in the supernatural, that is, in the One who was apart from nature, and did rule over it. But now that I believe that God is *in* nature, ruling through it, and *in* humanity, ruling in the hearts of men, all the natural seems to me most supernatural, and all the supernatural most natural. For not now and then in special episodes and exceptional interferences does the finger of God appear; not now and then, as when the engineer adds the steam or subtracts it, or reverses his engine, does the will of God show itself in life; not now and then does the King appear as King, by the issuance of a new edict. God is in all of nature; all its forces are the forces of God; all its laws are the methods of God; all its activities are the activities of God. And in human nature the laws of God are the

beatific influences which proceed from him, the spiritual forces projected from him as the rays from the sun, and which vivify the hearts of those who receive them.

Creation, therefore, is no longer the manufacture of a globe by an architect or a builder. It is not something that God did six thousand years ago, and, ending, stopped to rest. Creation is a continuous process. It is always going on. The geologists tell us that the same convulsions that shook the solid world in the time of its birth, that shot the mountains up and dug the channels for the seas and the rivers, are going on even in historic times. God is always creating. Every flower is a new creation. Every day he separates the waters that are under the firmament from the waters that are above the firmaments; for he it is who daily and hourly lifts the clouds from their ocean bed and causes them to float in the air above. Every spring is a new creation, and he himself is the secret and the source and the centre of all the life. Between the philosophy that says there is no God or

there is only an absentee God, and the philosophy that says that God is in all phenomena and if there were no God there would be no phenomena, there is certainly nothing of kin. These are not extremes that meet. The abolition of the distinction between natural and supernatural for the purpose of getting rid of the supernatural is one thing; the abolition of the distinction for the purpose of affirming that the supernatural is in everything is quite another.

A writer in the *Interior*, of Chicago, said, in a criticism on one of my lectures, some years ago, that Dr. Abbott held that God created amœbæ, and amœbæ did the rest. I do not know how it would be possible in a sentence of equal length to state more clearly what I exactly do *not* believe. I hold that God is the secret and the source and the centre of all life. When your spirit departs from your body the body crumbles into dust. If I could conceive the Spirit of God departing from nature I think all nature would crumble to dust. No longer would the planets

circle around the sun; no longer would clouds float in the air; no longer would the sunbeams flood the earth; no longer would flowers bloom, or water run, or rain fall, or men walk, or living creatures breathe. God is himself the life of life. All things are his breath; literally, scientifically, absolutely, in him all things live and move and have their being.

I have, therefore, for myself, practically abandoned the distinction between general providences and special providences. A special providence is, in this new conception of God's relation to the universe, nothing but a general providence specially perceived. It is a clearer perception of the universal presence. God is in all the phenomena; sometimes we wake up and see him; then we say, "Behold, a special providence." It is we who have opened our eyes. This is what I think Christ means when he says: Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. This is what he means when he bids us pray day by day for our daily bread. The children at the table do not realize that

the bread and milk which they have regularly for supper is the father's gift as well as the box of candy which he brings home on birthdays; but the one is as much the father's providence as the other, only the children specialize the one and recognize it. That is all.

Therefore, a miracle no longer seems to me a manifestation of extraordinary power, but an extraordinary manifestation of ordinary power. God is always showing himself. Perhaps some of you may think this is a new theology; but this particular bit of theology is as old as Augustine, and as orthodox. It is Augustine who said, a birth — I am not quoting his exact words, but I am giving the spirit of them — a birth is more miraculous than a resurrection, because it is more wonderful that something that never was should begin to be, than that something which was and ceased to be should begin again. The difference between the birth and the resurrection is that one is made palpable to our senses every day, and the other in the one great event of human history was made

palpable to the senses of a few witnesses in years long gone by. The mere fact that a miracle is an extraordinary event seems to me to constitute no reason for discrediting it. For the credibility of an event does not depend upon the nature of the event, but upon the nature of the testimony which attests it. If the Old Testament told the story of a naval engagement between the Jewish people and a pagan people, in which all the ships of the pagan people were absolutely destroyed, and not a single man killed among the Jews, all the skeptics would have scorned the narrative. Every one now believes it — except those who live in Spain.

Do I, then, believe in miracles? I believe in some, and some events that have been called miracles I do not believe, and some I do not think were intended to be regarded as miracles at all. The story of the sun and the moon standing still I do not think was intended to be taken as history by the man who wrote the narrative. It was poetry, and is quoted from an old

poetic legend. The story of the great fish that swallowed a prophet I do not believe was ever intended to be taken as history by the man who wrote it. I think it is a genial yet keen satire of Jewish narrowness, written for the purpose of making clear that there is a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea. Some other of the strange events recorded in the Bible seem to me story rather than history; I do not think them well authenticated; nor does their historical truthfulness appear to me a matter of any importance. The story that once upon a time an ax-head dropped into a pool and sunk, and a prophet threw in a branch and then the ax-head swam again, to me carries a better lesson if I think of it as an illustration of the Hebrew folk-lore, the sort of stories that mothers told their children in the olden time, than it does if I try to make myself think it happened — because I do not succeed very well if I do try.[1] The Book of Ruth is clearly romance, though

[1] In Bartlett and Peters's edition of the Scriptures this story is classed with Literature, not with History.

historical romance; I see no reason for doubting that the Samson story is so also. The mere mechanical fact that one narrative is incorporated in the Book of Judges and the other is separated from it does not seem to me to affect the question either of credibility or interpretation. On the other hand, the resurrection of Jesus Christ seems to me to be the best-attested fact of ancient history; attested by the witness of disciples whose interest would not have led them to attest it and whose prejudices were all against their faith in it; attested by the change of the day of rest from the seventh day, which the Jewish nation had up to that time kept, to the first day, ever after celebrating the resurrection; attested by the growth and life of Christianity itself, which, if Christ did not rise from the dead, I must think was historically founded on either a great folly or a great fraud, and to believe that would be to believe that there is no moral order in the universe. That the disciples had ocular evidence which convinced them against all their preconceptions that the Christ was

living whom they thought was dead appears to me as certain as any fact in history can be. Whether that ocular demonstration was afforded by the return of the departed spirit to reanimate the crucified body, or by the disciples' vision of the spiritual and incorporeal body, appears to me a question neither possible nor important to determine. The former hypothesis presents, I think, the fewer difficulties; but the fact of continuous life is the one and only important fact.

Surely this conception of God in all nature, all life, all epochs, is not carrying God away from us. It is bringing him nearer. If every springtime, as I see the buds growing and the leaves putting themselves forth, and the flowers beginning to bloom, and the birds beginning to sing, I look out and say, "God is creating a new world;" if in every incident and accident, so called, of my life, I look to see what the voice of God is for me, what errand he would send me on, what mission he would give me, what he means; if all events seem to me to have God's voice in them, and I

seek to understand them all and follow them all; if every event is a manifestation of his presence and power, and a miracle only an unusual manifestation of a power equally present at all times and in all eras — surely my philosophy is not getting me away from God, but nearer to him.

It is not easy to formulate in a sentence that change which has come over my thought, and, as I believe, the thought of the present generation, respecting God's relation to man. Shall I say we are coming to think of God as dwelling *in* man rather than as operating *on* man from without? This might be taken to imply a denial or at least a doubt of God's personality, and of man's personality as distinct and separate from God's, and this implication I vigorously and energetically disavow. If I speak of God in man, it is as one speaks of one soul working within another, so that the two personalities intermingle, the two lives are intertwined. Perhaps it will be better to attempt no formal statement of the general principle; rather to illustrate it by special applications.

Revelation, then, appears to me less a sudden disclosure to man of God, as some one external and before hidden, than a gradual awakening in man of that spiritual life which alone can take cognizance of God. Revelation is the unveiling of God. There has been a great deal of discussion about the nature of inspiration. Dr. McConnell, formerly of Brooklyn, has called attention to the fact that the word "inspiration" occurs but twice in the Bible,[1] and only once in such connection that it can be deemed to refer to Scriptural teaching. The claim of the Bible writers for themselves is not that they were inspired by God, but that they have made a revelation of God. What does this mean?

Revelation is unveiling, and discovery is uncovering; two words more nearly synonymous I do not know where to find. The revelation of God is simply the unveiling or the uncovering or the discovery of God. What the Bible writers claim for themselves is this: "We have been studying life, history, nature, our own

[1] Job xxxii, 8; 2 Timothy iii, 16.

personal experiences; and we have found some truths about God, and we tell you what they are." The word "discovery" is used for science; the word "revelation" for theology; but they mean substantially the same thing — the unveiling of the secret of life. Science goes a little way in the search and stops; the prophet goes further, and discovers behind all the forces and all the laws which science has discovered the Infinite and External Energy from which all things proceed, the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness, — in a word, God. Discovery is the revelation of the laws and forces operating in nature. Revelation is the discovery of Him who is the Lawgiver and the Force-producer. Discovery is revelation in the physical realm; revelation is discovery in the spiritual realm. The man of outsight, with skill in the observation of the sensuous world, is a discoverer; the man of insight, with skill in the perception of the invisible world, is a revelator.

God has given to different nations different missions.

He has given to Rome the mission of teaching the world the meaning of law; to Greece the meaning of art and philosophy; to the Hebrew race the meaning of religion. He has given this race this message: Tell the world what you can learn of God and his relation to men. The Hebrew people have added nothing to the architecture, the art, the philosophy of life; but they have been a prophetic race — discoverers of God. In this race there were preëminently religious men, who saw God more clearly than their fellows, and God's relation to mankind more clearly, and God's relation to human events more clearly, and told their fellows what they saw. And, from all their telling, natural selection says the scientist, providence says the theologian, — I say the two are the same, — elected those that had in them the most vital truth, the most enduring, the most worthy to endure. Thus we have in the Old Testament something like two-score of writers, the most spiritually-minded of a spiritually-minded race, telling us what they have discovered con-

cerning God. This is the Bible. It is the gradual discovery of God in the hearts and through the tongues of prophets who were themselves members of a prophetic race.

God is always revealing himself, and has always been revealing himself. He has always been knocking at the door; he has always been standing at the window. He has always been showing his character. They who have seen it best and most clearly, and had power to tell us what they have seen, are the world's prophets. What is distinctive in respect to Hebrew law is not its universal applicability to the human race — there is a great deal in the Hebrew law to which we no longer pay any attention; it is the recognition of the fact that God is the great lawgiver. What is peculiar in the Hebrew history is not its narration of great battles, great statesmen's endeavors and achievements; it is the history of the dealing of God with a particular people. God is as truly with the American race as he ever was with the Hebrew race; as truly with Abraham

Lincoln as he was with Moses. The difference between the Hebrew race and the American race is the difference between the Old Testament Scriptures and the modern newspaper. The modern newspaper is enterprising, and it gathers news, and gathers gossip that is not news, from the four quarters of the globe; but it fails to see God in human history. The Old Testament prophets did not show the same enterprise, did not have the same wideness of view; but they did see God in human history, and have helped us to see him. That vision of God is equally characteristic of the fiction of the Bible — Ruth, Esther, Jonah, the parable of the prodigal son (there are some people who think it is irreverent to suggest that there is any fiction in the Old Testament, but quite right to find it in the words of Christ in the New), and of the drama of the Bible — the epic drama of Job, the love drama of the Song of Songs. In these is seen a manifestation, a revelation of goodness and truth and righteousness, and, above all, of a personal God dealing with

men. This is the characteristic of the Hebrew poetry. We find more beautiful phrasing in Wordsworth, or in Tennyson, or in Longfellow, or in Whittier, but nowhere do you find in literature, ancient or modern, such discoveries of God as in the Hebrew Psalter. The "Eternal Goodness" may seem to you more beautiful than the One Hundred and Third Psalm; but would Whittier have written "Eternal Goodness" if he had not read the One Hundred and Third Psalm?

But if this be so, and the Bible be a revelation and disclosure of God, why not new revelations? Why not new disclosures? Why not a new Bible? If the American continent was discovered by Columbus, why does not some one discover a new continent? Because we have discovered all the continents there are. What is it that this Bible tells us about God, the Infinite and the Eternal Energy from which all things proceed, the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness? Sum it all up, put it in the briefest statement; what does it tell us respecting God?

God is love. Love is service. The highest manifestation of service is self-sacrifice. The highest self-sacrifice is the laying down of one's life for the sake of the wholly undeserving.

Is there anything to be added to that message? Can you conceive of any statement respecting the Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed, the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness, beyond these four declarations —first, this Infinite and Eternal Energy is love; second, this love shows itself in unpaid service; third, this service runs beyond all self-glorification into self-sacrifice; and, last of all, this self-sacrifice shows itself in laying down life that the undeserving may walk along the prostrate form up to the eternal heights of glory? If any one has another revelation, let him bring it.

But there is opportunity, infinite opportunity, for added disclosure of God, added revelation of God, in the unfolding and application of this truth to the experiences of the nation, the church, and the individual. If it were not so, you and I

could not go on preaching upon this Bible. If there were not revelations in the Bible that the Bible writers themselves did not fully comprehend; if there were not revelations in the Bible that all the past has not discovered; if we were not continually finding new meanings in old texts; if God was not continually rewriting his Bible in our experience, and giving us a new message to new generations, we might well close our church doors and stop our preaching. We preachers are not to stop at the revelation which God has made of himself to others; we are to take that revelation that he may be revealed to us and by us. The Bible is a guide to revelation, not a substitute for it. Only as we so use the Bible that we stop not at the book, but go through the book to the God who gave it forth, are we worthy to be prophets and preachers in this nineteenth century.

The forgiveness of sins is, in my thinking of it, no longer an exceptional, episodical manifestation of a supernatural grace; it is the revelation and effect of the

habit of mind of the Eternal Father toward all his children. The laws of forgiveness are a part of the laws of the Almighty and the All-gracious. It is said that the violation of natural law is never forgiven. It is said that if you put your finger in the candle, it will burn, pray as you will, and if you fall from your horse, you will break a bone, however pious you may be; whether the bone breaks or not depends, not upon your piety, but upon your age. Is it indeed true that there is no forgiveness in natural law? What a strange-looking audience this would be if there were none. The boy cuts his finger and nature begins to heal it; he breaks his arm — nature begins to knit the bone; he burns his finger — nature provides a new skin. Nature, that is, God, implants in man himself the help-giving powers that remove disease; and, in addition, stores the world full of remedies also, so that specifics may be found for almost every disease to which flesh is heir. The laws of healing are wrought into the physical realm; they are a part of the divine

economy; and shall we think that He who helps the man to a new skin and to a new bone cares nothing for his moral nature, and will not help him when he has fallen into sin?

Forgiveness of sin is not remission of penalty. It may include that, or it may not; but it is not that. Redemption is not letting a man out of one place and putting him into another; it is not barring the doors of hell and throwing open the doors of heaven. The phrase used in the Greek Testament for the forgiveness of sins is two Greek words meaning sending away of sin; and I believe I am right, though I make the statement with some hesitation, that that Greek phrase, the sending away of sin, is never used in classical Greek to signify forgiveness, and is always used in the New Testament Greek to signify forgiveness. Two men are arrested and are brought before a New York court; one is sent to Elmira Reformatory, where he must stay until he is cured; one is sent to Sing Sing for ten years. The one who is sent to Sing Sing

has political influence and gets a pardon after he has been there three months, and comes out to plunge into thievery again; the other man stays ten years in Elmira Reformatory, and comes out an honest man, to live an honest life. Which of these men is redeemed? — the man who escapes the penalty and continues in the sin, or the man who is delivered from the sin and bears the penalty? Forgiveness is not remission of penalty, though it may include that. Forgiveness is remission of the sin itself; and God is always lifting off the sins of the world. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they" — *the sins themselves* — "shall be white as snow." "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of" — penalty? No! — "the remission of sin." I no longer believe that Christ died that he might bear the penalty which a just God must inflict because law required it; I believe he died that he might give life by his death — the remission, not of penalty, but of the sin itself. "Behold," says John, "the Lamb of God which taketh

away the sin of the world." Oh, how we belittle Scripture! I used to think that text meant, Behold, the Lamb of God which takes away some sins from some men, in some parts of the world. No! He is the Lamb of God, who is taking away *the* sin from *the* world, and when his work is done the end will be a sinless world.

I no longer think of sacrifice as one act done on man's behalf by the Son of God to propitiate divine wrath or satisfy divine law. I believe not less but more profoundly in sacrifice since I have come to think of it as the law of spiritual life, and of Christ as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. For the phrase "suffering love" appears to me to be tautology. Love must suffer so long as the loved one sins or suffers. So long as God is love and his children sin and suffer, God suffers with and for them. The sacrifice of Christ is the revelation of a sacrifice which will not end till sin and suffering shall be no more. From the hour when Eve looked with puzzled an-

guish into the unresponsive face of Abel, marble-like in the mystery of death, and then went out in the unutterable longings of a mother's heart after the fugitive brother, down to this hour, love has suffered for the stricken and for the sinful, and through anguished and broken hearts has poured itself out in sacrifice to save. Vicarious sacrifice is the law of life; that is, it is the law of God's own nature. The divinest thing man ever does is to suffer for another; and the divinest form of sacrifice is that suffered for the unworthy; and its greatest triumph is won when, through sacrifice, the unworthy becomes worthy. The long history of love's sacrifices seems to me the history of God's love dwelling in human hearts and inspiring human lives to their highest and divinest service; and the sacrifice of Christ seems to me the climacteric expression of that love, the supreme revelation of God's life, the supreme gift of God's life. The sacrifice is offered not by nor on behalf of man to God, but by God for the life of man; it is not the condition on which

God grants forgiveness, but the method by which he forgives — that is, delivers his children from the death of sin by imparting to them the life of holiness. As the truth of God is revealed in all the teachings of prophets, as the benevolence of God is revealed in all the philanthropies of the humane, so the deeper love of God is revealed in all the sacrificial love of earth's vicarious sufferers. And as Christ is the consummation of the revelation of the truth of God by his teaching, and of the benevolence of God by his service, so is he the consummation of the deeper love of God by his suffering and sacrifice.

Incarnation: what is that? God was in Christ. Why? Christ said of himself, "I am the door." A door is not to be simply looked at; you push it open and go in. Why was God in Christ? Why was Christ a door? In order that through Christ God might enter into the human race and the human race might enter into Christ.

In my friend's house on the Hudson

River is a window framed in as though it were a picture; one opening the door and coming into that room and looking, sees, as though hanging on the wall, a picture, including the mountains, the valley, the river, the distant city. I imagine two persons coming in and looking at that picture; one saying, "This is an image of the landscape hand-painted;" the other, "No, that is the real mountain, the real valley, the real river, seen through a glass." The one no less than the other thinks the real is represented. That seems to me fairly to represent the difference between the *liberal* Congregationalist and the *orthodox* Unitarian. The orthodox Unitarian looks at the picture on the wall, and says, "That is not the image of God, but it looks exactly like him." Now, I am orthodox; I believe that through the window I see God himself in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the image of God, the reflection of God, God manifest in the flesh; that is, such a manifestation of God as is possible in a human life. I never say, I never should say, Jesus Christ is God,

because what I said a few moments ago, and you then agreed with me, I repeat now, when some of you will not agree with me: GOD IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ALL HIS MANIFESTATIONS. Jesus Christ is one of the manifestations of God, but God is more than the sum of all his manifestations.[1] You hear a great preacher like Phillips Brooks, and you say, "I have heard Phillips Brooks." I beg your pardon — you have heard one little bit of Phillips Brooks. He is a great deal more than any sermon he ever preached; and if you gather all his sermons together and read them all, still there are in him resources that you have not seen. When I look at the one transcendent historical manifestation of God in Jesus Christ tabernacling in the flesh,

[1] The question of the tri-personality of God, — the Trinity of Person as distinguished from the Trinity of manifestation, — including the question of the conscious preëxistence of the Logos, it did not come within the province of this address to discuss. Personally, I accept the Trinitarian view of tri-personality; that is, that the Trinity of manifestation apparent to us has a basis in a Trinity of Person necessarily hidden from us.

there is no praise I would give to the Father that I will not give to him, no prayer I will direct to the Father that I will not direct to him, no reverence I will show to the Father that I will not show to him; and yet, when I am asked of my philosophy, Is Jesus Christ God? I reply, God is more than the sum of all his manifestations, and, therefore, God is more than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and God entering into that flesh in order that he may enter into the whole of humanity — God in man.

The question is sometimes asked — it was asked, I remember, a few years ago of a young theological student in the State of Maine — "Do you think the divinity of Jesus Christ differs in kind or differs in degree from the divinity of man?" He replied, "In degree." For that he was sharply called to account by the "Advance," and we asked in the "Outlook," "Will the 'Advance' tell us how the divinity in man differs in kind from the divinity in God?" and never got an

answer. There are not two kinds of divinity. If there are, then there are two kinds of God. That is polytheism. There is only one divine patience, righteousness, one divine justice, one divine love, one divine mercy. The divinity in man is the same in kind as the divinity in Christ, because it is the same in kind as the divinity in God. We are made in God's image. That means that we are in kind like God. It is sin, and only sin, which makes us unlike him. We are children of God. That means that our natures are themselves begotten of him, flow forth from him. A sinless man would be the image of the Eternal Father, because the child of the Eternal Father, begotten of God. God has come into Christ and filled that one life full of himself, so that when you look at it you look through the glass and see the Father; and this he has done in order that he may come into your life and my life; in order that he may dwell in us and fill us full of himself.

If one objects to the statement that God is incarnating himself in the human race I

will not use the phraseology, because I will not shock people's minds needlessly; but I believe that God came into Christ and filled Christ full of himself in order that he might come unto us and fill us full of himself. And so I dare to try to go where he leads; and when he climbs those mountain heights, stands so far above me, and still beckons and calls down to me, and says, "Lyman Abbott, follow me," I believe I can, or he would not call me; he would not tell me to go if he would not give me the power to go. And so I dare to pray, though as with bated breath, the prayer which Paul has taught us: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

It seems to me, then, that the relation of nature and the supernatural to Christian thought has undergone a great change in the last half century; and that it is a

change which promotes Christian life, because it brings God nearer to us in our Christian thought, and makes religion seem more natural and more real. In the thought of to-day God is not apart from nature and life, but in nature and life; creation is continuous; all events are providential; revelation is progressive; forgiveness is through law, not in violation of it; sacrifice is the divine method of life-giving; incarnation is not consummated until God dwells in all humanity and Jesus Christ is seen to be the first-born among many brethren. Then, when God's work is done, and he is everywhere, — as he is now everywhere but in the hearts of those who will not have him, — when he is in human hearts and lives, as he has been in all nature and in all history, then will come the end, and God will be all and in all.

III

GOD IN HUMANITY

III

GOD IN HUMANITY[1]

MANY converging tendencies have operated to bring about a time peculiarly adapted for great spiritual work in and through the Christian Church. We have already entered upon an epoch, intellectual, social, spiritual, which we can make an epoch of the greatest spiritual movement the world has ever seen.

When Christianity passed over into Europe, it found Europe dominated by a great imperialistic system. Cæsar was the supreme authority. His edicts were absolute law — ecclesiastical, civil, political law — throughout the empire. He was represented by a host of subordinates, who were simply the instruments to interpret and execute these laws. He was absolutely inaccessible to the great multitude of the citizens of the Roman Em-

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pire; they could come to him only through his subordinates, who were mediators between the people and the Emperor. Christianity, entering into Europe and pervading it, adopted, naturally, as its ecclesiastical machinery, this framework of government. The pagan Roman Empire was transformed, as Mr. Bryce has well shown us, into the Holy Roman Empire. Cæsar became the Pope; the prefects and subprefects became bishops and archbishops and rectors and curates; but the essential principle of the ecclesiastical system remained what the essential principle of the political system had been — absolute imperialism. The Pope was the vicar and representative of Almighty God — the supreme and absolute authority. The decrees of the Vatican were the laws of God. The bishops and archbishops and curates and rectors were the representatives of this Cæsar. They were the mediators between him and the people.

At the same time Christianity was modified in its thinking, or rather was transformed in its thinking, by this imperialistic

system. The Hebrews were not philosophers. The Old Testament contains no philosophy; the New Testament contains very little, except such as is to be found in Paul's Epistles, and not a great deal even there. But when Christianity passed over into Europe it took on a philosophic form, and in Rome the Roman and therefore the imperialistic form. God was conceived of as a celestial Cæsar, sitting in the centre of the universe and ruling it. The Church was the representative of this divine Cæsar. The laws of God were edicts issued from him and handed down to men. This God was inaccessible to the great majority of men: they had no ears to hear him, no capacity to reach him; they must reach him through mediators. First was Christ, the divine Mediator. But Christ was too holy and too remote. Next there was the Mother of God, as the mediator through whom to come to the Christ; but she was too holy and too remote. Then there were saints to come to the Mother of God, and priests to come to the saints. And so the individual came to the priest, and the priest

to the saints, and the saints to the Mother of God, and the Mother of God to Christ, and Christ to the Eternal. The Eternal was an absentee God, dwelling in a far-off world. Law issued from him; sin was disobedience to that law; forgiveness was remission of the penalty for violating that law; access to him was only through a throng of mediators.

The Reformation broke down the ecclesiastical system for the Reformers and the children of the Reformers. The Protestant world said, "The Pope is not the vicar of God; the Church is not the supreme and final authority." The Church had held to the sacredness of the Bible, but to the Bible as the constitution of the Church. It was not for the common people; it was for the Church; and the Church was to interpret it and to declare its meaning. The Protestant Reformers went back of the Church, of the priesthood, of the human mediators, to the Bible. They said, "Any man may take this constitution; any man may interpret it." But still Protestantism accepted and

adopted — unconsciously, perhaps — the notion of an absentee God. Still God was conceived of as enthroned in the centre of the universe, as the Moral Governor; and laws as edicts issued from him; and sin as disobedience to those laws; and forgiveness as remission of a future penalty; and the Bible as the book of his laws, and an authoritative statement of certain conditions precedent to obtaining that forgiveness.

But presently there began to come another set of influences weakening the belief that the Bible is an ultimate and supreme authority. First came geology, with its message that the world was not made in six days. The Church replied, "Six days does not mean six days; it means six long periods." Then came anthropology, with its message that man was not created six thousand years ago; that he has been on the earth at least ten or fifteen or twenty thousand years. The Church replied, "The Bible is not authority on matters of chronology." Then came evolutionary science, with its message that man was not made per-

fect; he has been developed gradually, like all other animals, from a germ. And then the Church replied — nothing. Then followed literary criticism. It analyzed this Bible, and compared it with other literatures, and announced its conclusions: These laws of Moses were not handed down complete, once for all; they are composed of various elements which can be distinguished; this code of laws was gradually produced, and the progress of their gradual development can be traced. Then came the study of comparative religions, with its message: We can find the Hebraic legends of creation and fall and deluge in the older religions of Egypt, of Phœnicia, and of Assyria. Little by little the Protestant faith that the Bible is the supreme and final authority was weakened, and for some destroyed. Whether we like it or not, that lessening of the authority of the Book as a book must be recognized. We have only to compare the sermons of the great orthodox preachers of the past and the present to see the difference of appeal.

While this process was going on within the churches, there was going on a process without, subtle, powerful, irresistible. Science was attacking the notion of an absentee God, a God who can be defined, described, analyzed, interpreted in creeds. Science, which, first, showed how vast the universe was; which, secondly, showed how the universe was all one ; which, third, showed that the same forces were at work in this world and in the remotest sun and in this epoch and in the remotest epoch, so that all days are equally creative, undermined the notion of a celestial Cæsar sitting on a celestial throne afar off, creating matter and force out of nothing, and laws to govern them, and leaving them to their own operation with occasional interventions on his part. Then came history. History had been mere annals, the mere story of events, the mere record of lives. Voltaire, I think, was the first one to portray history as a development of life. He was followed by others, — Mommsen, Curtis, Arnold, Buckle, Macaulay, Green. All these men differed from the old classical historians in

tracing history as a gradual process of development — the widening out and the upbuilding of humanity — and in thus showing a divine development in humanity as science had shown it in nature. Then came literature and the study of comparative literatures, the literatures of Greece and Rome and Italy and England, and last, but not least, of the Hebrew people, and of the common life of man that animates them all and underlies them all; and the discovery (for it was almost a discovery) that remorse is as universal as the human race, and forgiveness as universal, and love and pity and sympathy as universal; and that underneath all nations and all races and in all eras there beats, not merely one blood, but one human, palpitating, emotive life. This process has been resisted by some men in the Church and feared by more; but the resistance has been in vain and the fears have been needless. For it has been a divinely ordered process toward a profounder faith, a larger hope, and a closer and tenderer love.

Among the cartoons of Raphael is one representing the creation. A venerable gentleman is represented as seated cross-legged upon the ground, with the various portions of a child's Noah's Ark before him, putting the different parts of the animals together. It was a great artist's conception of a divine creation. That notion of an absentee God — an imperial Cæsar sitting in the centre of the universe ruling things, whose edicts are laws, who is approached only from afar by men — that is gone, or going. There are some of us who still cling to it, and to whom the removal of that image seems like atheism; some that are trying to cling to it, though their grasp is loosening; some that are trying to make themselves believe that they still believe in it; but it has gone, or is going. Not merely the final authority of the Church is undermined; not merely the authority of the Book as an ultimate court of appeal is lessened; but the conception of a God sitting in the centre of the universe ruling things, as an imperial Cæsar sits in Rome ruling things — that

also is growing dim or absolutely disappearing. What is coming in its place?

I am not going to ask the theologians what is coming in its place; I will first ask the scientists.

Herbert Spencer was not, in my opinion, a great philosopher; but he was a great interpreter of the philosophic tendency of his times; and this is Herbert Spencer's answer to the question, what will science put in the place of this conception of a divine Cæsar sitting in a celestial robe:

> But one truth must ever grow clearer — the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested, to which we can neither find nor conceive either beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain this one absolute certainty, that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.

What has science to offer? This: that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things

proceed. No longer an absentee God; no longer a Great First Cause, setting in motion secondary causes which frame the world; no longer a divine mechanic, who has built the world, stored it with forces, launched it upon its course, and now and again interferes with its operation if it goes not right; but one great, eternal, underlying Cause, as truly operative to-day as he was in that first day when the morning stars sang together — every day a creative day. That is the word of science.

What is the word of history? The historian tells us there is a progress in human development, and that history illustrates that progress, and that not only the individual man grows from babyhood to manhood, but the whole race of men grow from infantile beginnings to a future, we know not what. Is there any meaning in this? Is there any power behind it? And what does this power mean? And, again, we turn to a historian, not a theologian, — not even an orthodox historian, — to Matthew Arnold. He tells that the one thing history makes sure is that there is a power

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not ourselves that makes for righteousness; a power to-day at work in the world as truly and as efficaciously as ever in the past; that the evolutionary processes that are going on are making for righteousness.

Finally, we turn to literature, and we ask one of the great poets to tell us what is to take the place of this Romanized conception of an absentee God. What has human experience to tell? What word have the men of vision to bring back to us as the product of their insight into human life? And this is Tennyson's reply: —

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?
Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but that which has power to feel, I am I?
Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendor and gloom.
Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet."

The notion of a humanized God, sitting in the centre of the universe ruling things, is gone; and in the place of it science has brought us back this: "We are ever in the presence of the Infinite;" and history has brought us back this: "There is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness;" and literature has brought us back this: "Spirit with spirit can meet; closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or feet."

Am I then a pantheist? Is this pantheism? I suppose there are a great many persons who do feel that this changed conception of God is going to destroy the personality of the Divine. Is it?

Go into a great cathedral, as St. Paul's or St. Peter's. As you look on these great pillars, on this great dome, this splendid architecture, you say: I see here the fruit of the personality of Wren or of Michael Angelo; I am looking on something more than stones and mortar; I am looking on the work of a great mind and a great heart. But now imagine for one moment that as you stood there you could

see stone reared upon stone, and column upon column; you could see some invisible hand tracing the fretwork around the columns and carving the beautiful forms; as you looked, the cathedral grew into its splendid proportions; and then some invisible force lifted the great dome and put it like the dome of heaven on the columns underneath. Would you think the personality was gone because it was operative before your eyes? Am I to think that there was a personal God six thousand years ago, or sixty thousand years ago, or six hundred thousand years ago, and that to-day, when I can go out and see him painting the leaves, and starting this fall the beginnings for next year's spring — see the love and life of the ever present God at work before my eyes, can I think that his personality is gone? No; a thousand times nearer, a thousand times closer. We are in the presence of the great Divine personality. What we mean by personality is this: The Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, is an energy that thinks, that feels, that pur-

poses and does; and is thinking and feeling and purposing and doing as a conscious life, of which ours is but a poor and broken reflection.

The image which in my childhood I formed of God as a great king sitting upon a great white throne was really an idol, though it was not formed of stone nor painted upon a canvas. It is not to such an imagination we are to go for a realization of the personality of God. God has personified himself in human history. He has entered into one human life, and filled that life so full of himself that in Jesus Christ we see the image of the Invisible God. Christianity is not an episode. The life of Christ is not a historical event completed in three short years. Jesus Christ is the revelation of an Eternal Fact, and the Eternal Fact is the Ever Present God. I stood one night on the top of Mount Washington. The clouds were passing over the mountain all the evening, and the moon was behind them, and I stood in a diffused light, sometimes brighter, sometimes less bright;

but every now and then the moon would seem to break through the clouds, and bend down and rush toward the earth as though it would kiss the very foreheads of those of us who were looking at it, and then as suddenly it would retire again, and the clouds once more obscure it. But it was always there. So the "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" was always in the world, and always will be in the world as long as God is love and man has need of him. The coming of Christ to the Church was in order that we might know that God is. It was the revelation of a perpetual incarnation; the revelation of an unseen but eternal presence. Too long we have stood at the foot of the cross or at the door of the tomb, and not seen the stone rolled away and the triumphant Saviour emerging. Too long we have thought of the life of Christ ending with his passion and death. But the greatest part of his life is his post-resurrection life.

For the message of the Gospel is not merely that Jesus Christ lived and died

eighteen hundred years ago, teaching here for three short years and then disappearing, to be an absentee Christ; it is that God is always pouring out his life upon men and into their hearts, lifting them up out of their sins, succoring them from their remorse, and making them live again. Long before Christ lived the Psalmist wrote: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; who healeth all thy diseases; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Men said, "What does that mean?" And God said, "I will tell you." And he came, and for a little while he lived among men; he forgave the woman that was a sinner, and bade her go in peace, and sin no more. This, he said, is what I mean by forgiving iniquity. He succored doubting Thomas from the scepticism in which he was entangled, of the unstable Peter he made a rock, and of the ambitious John the beloved disciple and the prophet of a spiritual life. This,

he said, is what I mean by the healing of diseases. He surrounded the traitor Judas Iscariot with love, and recovered the denying Peter and sent him back, reconsecrated, to his ministry. This, he said, is what I mean by saving men from their own destruction.

Did he cease then? He has been doing this work of love ever since. The history of the world has been simply this: man sinning, God forgiving; man diseased, God healing; man destroying himself, God redeeming him from his self-destruction; man sordid and selling himself into slavery, and God recovering him from slavery and crowning him with lovingkindness and tender mercies. And the message of the Christian minister to-day to this sorrowing, sinful, troubled humanity is, "The God that was in the world then is in the world now." It is not Browning's message, "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world." If God were in his heaven, all would not be right with the world. He is in his world making it right.

I suppose there are some of you here tonight who will feel that this frank recognition of the overthrow of old forms of faith is injurious. I wish you who hold still to the sacredness of the Roman theology would consider this question one moment. You remember how Gideon, beating out the grapes in the wine-press, was told by God to destroy the idol of Baal and cut down the groves, and how, when the people came out the next morning and found their idol and their sacred grove gone, they rose in wrath against him, because he had destroyed their religion. But he had not destroyed their religion; he had simply given it a wider scope and a purer life. You remember how, when Jesus Christ told the people at Jerusalem that the temple would be destroyed, they identified religion with that temple and with those sacrifices and that priesthood, and counted as an enemy of religion any man who said that all those things were to be destroyed. But he was not the enemy of religion; and the destruction of that Jerusalem and of that priesthood

and the overthrow of those sacrifices were only the opening out of a larger life. You remember how, when Luther said, Pope, you are no vicar of God; Church, you are no infallible representative of God, men all over Europe — honest men, devout men, godly men, and godly women — wrung their hands in despair and said, If there is no Church to interpret God's law, how shall we know what it is? But to this audience I need not argue that the destruction of the notion of an infallible Church only widened the scope and enhanced the power of religion. May it not perhaps be that the same God who destroyed the idol of Baal and the Jewish temple, and for us Protestants the power of the mediæval Church, has destroyed this idol that we have reared in our minds only in order that he may bring us nearer to himself?

God is in all nature; thank God for the scientists, for they are thinking the thoughts of God after him, whether they know it or not. God is in all humanity, and every man is a child of God whom

we are to endeavor to bring back to his Father. God is in history, forgiving and redeeming, as Christ was in Palestine, forgiving and redeeming. God is in human experience, inspiring, uplifting, life-giving. Our message to our congregations is not a mere ethical law, not a mere philosophy about God, not a mere reiteration of a traditional creed, not a mere interpretation of the Bible. But through ethics, and philosophy, and the creed, and the Bible, we are to bring this threefold message: the message of science — "We are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed;" the message of history — "There is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness;" the message of literature — "Speak to him, for he hears; closer is he than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." "We are all his offspring; he is not far from any one of us; in him we live and move and have our being."

IV

GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

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IV

GOD IN JESUS CHRIST[1]

THE apostle Paul, going to Athens, found himself in a city full of various idols, so full that an ancient satirist said that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man. Among the altars was one to The Unknown God. Paul made this inscription the text of his sermon, which may be summed up in the single sentence: "Whom therefore ye worship without knowing him, him declare I unto you." This is the message of Christmas to the world. What we celebrate on Christmas is a new unveiling of God.

"God manifest in the flesh." What do we mean by that? What I think is meant is the supremest manifestation of God possible in human life. And that is the supremest manifestation possible to humanity. Or, to restate it in different

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terms, what is meant is that what Jesus Christ is seen to be in the three years of his recorded life, the spirit of God is in the history of the human race.

A mother sits down on the floor and plays with her child with building-blocks. If she is a woman of sympathetic imagination she is herself a child for that hour. She shares her child's joys in his brief successes and his disappointments in his brief failures.

God lives as a child with his children for an hour that they may become acquainted with him and know that he is always living with them, often most truly when they see him least. There is much in the mother which remains unknown to the child. There is much in God which remains unknown to his children. But the child knows the mother because the mother has been a child with him. And we children may know our Father because he has been a child with us.

Three illustrations may help to make the principle clear.

Jesus Christ is not a manifestation of

certain attributes or qualities of God; he is God manifest in the flesh. He is not a temporary manifestation of God's mercy or pity, leaving his justice and his anger to be revealed in the future. There is no justice and no wrath in God which is not manifested in Jesus Christ; and there is no pity and no mercy in Jesus Christ which is not a reflection of the eternal pity and mercy of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To understand Jesus Christ is to understand God.

Jesus Christ began his ministry by attending a wedding-feast. His first miracle was wrought to prolong its festivities. He repeatedly compared the kingdom of God to a great festival. He accepted all social invitations; declined none. He declared himself that he came eating and drinking, and this was so characteristic of him that his enemies called him a glutton and wine-bibber. He compared himself to a musician piping in the street for the children to dance. Neither he nor his disciples observed the customary fasts of the church to which they belonged.

He was a favorite with the children, and they clustered about him and were willing that he should take them in his arms. His last meeting with his disciples was at a social meal, and with such a social meal he asked them ever to associate his memory.

If Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, God is not the austere being he is sometimes represented. There is much more truth in the philosophy of the child who said "God must have laughed when he made a monkey" than in that of the theologian who said "Jesus wept, but never laughed." Prayer and play are not incongruous. God is not the kind of father who wishes his children to hush their laughter when he enters the house. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," says the inspired writer — a motto which might well be put over the convent gate or hung in the prayer-meeting room. For to laugh is as religious as to weep; and smiles may bring us into the companionship of the Father no less than tears. Let us get rid of this notion that we must

always associate the thoughts of God with a spirit of great solemnity. Gayety and God are not mutually exclusive.

But Jesus Christ was not all gayety. "Woe unto you laughing ones," he said; "for ye shall mourn and weep." He had no sympathy for the jester who can take nothing seriously, but tries to make of life one huge protracted joke. He saw that the whole world groaneth and travaileth in pain, and he travailed with it. So did he enter into the sorrows of the sorrowing, so did he make them his own, that it was prophetically said that he "was acquainted with grief." The sorrows might be superficial and transient, they might be deep and abiding. He was not indifferent to either. When he had been preaching all day, and evening came, and his loyal disciples desiring for their Master some rest, asked him to send the congregation away, he would not do it until he had provided for their hunger. When the brother had died and the sisters were heartbroken, he shared their grief with them and mingled his tears with theirs.

To some it seems a profanation to think of God as suffering. To me it is a profanation to think of him as incapable of suffering. Love suffers when the loved one suffers. If God is love, God knows the sorrows as well as the joys of love. If Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, the tears shed at the grave of Lazarus and at the prospective destruction of Jerusalem are divine tears. To me the greatness of the infinite power and skill manifested at the same moment in the most distant star and in our globe by the forth-putting of the same wisdom and power is not so marvellous as the greatness of soul manifested in a sympathy which can share at one and the same time the joys of the wedding and the sorrows of the funeral. But why should I believe his power and his skill are infinite and refuse to believe that his sympathies are infinite? His children crowd about him, some with their gratitude, some with their reproaches, some exultant with victory, some humiliated by their defeats, some joyous, some in tears, some saints with songs and some

sinners with hopeless penitence, and he is not distraught. He hears all voices, shares all experiences, ministers to all needs.

To Jesus Christ sin was a disease to be cured rather than a crime to be punished. It awakened his pity, not his anger. Condemned for associating with sinners, he replied on one occasion, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." On another occasion he said that he had come to seek and to save that which is lost. And to him a lost soul was a soul not yet found. He compared such a soul to a coin mislaid, which the owner was seeking; to a sheep strayed from the fold, which the shepherd was seeking; to a prodigal son, whose return the father was awaiting. There is no one for whom society has so little hope as a lost woman; but Jesus never despaired of the recovery of even a lost woman. Even the Judas who betrayed him he sought to rescue with reproachful greeting: Friend, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? There

was only one character whose destiny he seemed himself unable to avert; the religious man whose religion was a false pretence, who was pious, but not humane; who devoured widows' homes and for a pretence made long prayers. The offal of Jerusalem was carried out of the city into the valley of Gehenna and there thrown upon fires always left burning, and there it was consumed. "Alas! for you hypocrite," cried Jesus, in an outburst of despairing pity, "how can you escape Gehenna?" To him such false pretences seemed like the offal of the universe, doomed to destruction.

Jesus Christ, saviour of men, is the revelation of God's perpetual presence and perpetual power in the world. Holiness is health. Sin is disease. Forgiveness is healing. God is the Great Physician. We come before him, not as criminals to be judged and punished, but as sick to be cured. Those who do not know that they are sick and need cure are the sickest of all. He is the "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." His life

in the world is a continuation of the life of Jesus Christ. It is the life which centuries before Christ David saw; which centuries after Christ so many of Christ's disciples fail to see:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thine age with good;
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

There has been a great deal of discussion and far too much hot debate concerning the relation of Jesus Christ to the Infinite and Eternal. We do not know — at least I do not know — enough to define that relation, but we do know enough to define his relation to us. That definition may be very briefly given in the following words: The supremest work of God is man, whom he has made

in his own image. The supremest revelation of God is therefore that afforded by the life and character of man. The supremest ideal of humanity is Jesus Christ. Therefore the supremest revelation of God to man is that to be found in the life and character of Jesus Christ. This is in my judgment the essence of the theological teaching of Paul on this subject.

We celebrate on Christmas, not the birth of Santa Claus, the patron saint of the children; not merely the birth of the Christ-child, symbol of all innocent childhood; nor yet alone the birth of the martyr-hero, leader and type of all who have lived and loved and suffered for their race. We celebrate a new unveiling of God to humanity, the dwelling of God in humanity. We celebrate the day when the love of God dawned on the world and the fear of the gods began slowly and sullenly to give way before the coming of the new day. Every year Christmas repeats its message: Fear God no more. He brings liberty to the enslaved, light to

the despairing, purer joy to the glad. He is the Comforter of the sorrowing, the Physician of the sick, the Healer of the sinful, the Friend and Companion of man.

V

GOD A SAVIOUR FROM SIN

V

GOD A SAVIOUR FROM SIN[1]

WHEN I was a child — whether it was my fault or the fault of my teachers or of the Church I do not know — I thought I ought to feel that I was a lost and ruined sinner, and was worthy of eternal punishment for my sins. Yet, as a little boy, I could not realize that I had committed sins that were worthy of eternal punishment; and I remember that I used sometimes to shut myself up in my room in the gloaming of the twilight, while the frogs were croaking in the not distant meadow and everything would tend to gloom, and try to make myself as miserable as I could, because I felt it necessary that I should have a conviction of sin. But I was also taught to think that if I believed certain things or if I received certain experiences, then I should be ex-

[1] Copyright, 1900, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

empted from the punishment which had been pronounced against me. And this was my conception of salvation. If I believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and had come to earth and had suffered in my stead, and really believed it, then the punishment which was pronounced against me would be transferred to him and I should be set free. I suspect something like that is not uncommon as a conception of salvation to this day. But the Gospel declares something very different. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Sin is not the same as punishment for sin. The New Testament says very little about saving men from punishment; it says a great deal about saving men from sin.

Turn over the pages of this same Gospel of Matthew to the closing chapters. Jesus Christ has brought the disciples about him at the Paschal Supper. The one traitor has gone out into the darkness; the eleven remain. Christ breaks the bread and passes it to them; he fills the cup and passes it to them; and he

says: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Remission means "sending away," therefore: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood for the sending away of your sins." Turn to Paul and see what is his conception of salvation. "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Observe it is in the past tense, not in the future; not he will make us alive, will raise us up, will make us sit together in heavenly places — he hath made us alive, hath raised us up, hath made us sit in heavenly places. Or turn to John "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Do you not see the difference between these two conceptions? The one thought is: I am in danger of punishment — I shall be saved from future penalty; the other: I am struggling with sin — I can be delivered from that. The one is — Jesus Christ has borne my punishment; the other is — Jesus Christ is bearing away my sin. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The one is — the pain and sacrifice and suffering of Christ is necessary because the wrath or the justice or the law of God requires that somebody should be punished; the other is — the sacrifice, the blood, the suffering, the passion of Jesus Christ is necessary that we should be cleansed from sin. Jesus Christ has come into the world to redeem us from sin: this is the vital matter, not the other.

Exemption from penalty without deliverance from sin would not be salvation. If a good man were to go to hell and stay there, he would be saved; if a bad man were to go to heaven and stay there, he would be lost. Peter says that Jesus

Christ preached to the spirits in prison. Scholars differ somewhat in the interpretation of the passage; but if it be true that Jesus Christ did go to hell and in hell preached, he was not a lost soul while he preached there. To be lost is to be in sin, not to be in hell; to be saved is to be in virtue, not to be in heaven. Heaven must be in us — and hell is in some.

This is the first truth I want to put before you. Salvation is character. Not on our condition but on our character does life depend. And although it is true that under God's government penalty follows sin; although it is true that under God's government happiness, the highest type and form of happiness, follows virtue; the virtue is not for the happiness, but for its own sake. It were better to be a righteous man and suffer eternally than to be an ignoble man and be clothed in fine linen and fare sumptuously eternally. Salvation is character; it is deliverance from sin; it is lifting the man out of the lower life and bringing him into

the higher life; it is making a man of one who is only in semblance a man or only half a man.

If this be true, then what is essential to the salvation is a change in character, not in external circumstance. If salvation is a change in condition, then external causes may change the condition and thus save; but if salvation is character, then the change must be in the character. A mob may tear down the Bastile and set free the prisoners therein, but a mob cannot make guilty men innocent. Guilty men can no more be made innocent by being set free from prison than innocent men can be made guilty by being hanged without a trial. If salvation is character, then the condition of salvation is in the character itself; something wrought within; wrought perhaps by an influence from without, but wrought within. A man who is attempting to commit suicide by drowning himself in the surf may be rescued; but no man can be rescued from the life of infamy, dishonor, pride, appetite, greed, selfishness, in spite of himself. Character cannot be

imputed. A guilty man may be treated as though he were innocent, but he cannot be made innocent unless he is transformed from within.

This is what Jesus Christ came to do. Not to show how we can escape hell and get into heaven, but to show how we can escape from ourselves and become other selves; to show how we may cease to be what we are and become what we desire to be. He came that he might teach us and empower us to be the men we want to be, the men we ought to be.

At least three things are necessary for this salvation in character, this transformation which alone is salvation: First, that the man should appreciate goodness; second, that he should have a purpose to attain it; and third, that he should have help from one stronger than himself in attaining it. And at least these three things Christ has come to give; he has come to show us what manhood is, he has come to put into us the hope of attaining it, and he has come to give us help in accomplishing that hope.

Eighteen centuries ago a babe was born in Bethlehem and grew up to manhood — we know not how. He saw the corruption about him; the vice that had entered into society; the despotism in government; the disunion and disruption of the homes; the ignorance and superstition, the greed and selfishness and cruelty in men's hearts; and he set himself to deliver men from themselves. He had wonderful power; he never used it for himself. He might have been rich; he says of himself: "The birds of the air have nests, and the foxes have holes; the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He might have selected his companions where he would; he took them from the humble, the lowly, and the ignorant; not only that, but often from the dull-headed, the low-spirited, and the poor in mind as well as in estate. He never saw sorrow that he did not try to comfort it; or a need that he did not try to help it. There was no physical condition so disgusting that it barred men from his sympathy. There was no sin that could

separate men from his helpfulness. The woman who was a sinner, whom other men would not touch nor look at except in scorn (whom they will not touch nor look at even to-day except in scorn), he looked at with pity, and said: "Go in peace and sin no more." Men did not understand it. He loved them, but they did not love him. They applauded him at times; at other times they scoffed at him. Three short years passed, and then the men whom he loved, the men whom he sought to save, hung him up on a cross and put him to death.

All that love means is interpreted in that unselfish life. And the first thing that Christ says to us is this: Is that the kind of life you want to live? Is that the kind of person you want to be? Do you want to live in this world to see what you can get out of it, or do you want to live in this world to see what you can put into it? Is your object self-service or the service of others? Do you want to make yourself rich or your neighbor rich? Do you want to make yourself famous, or are

you willing to use all your powers only to make others better and happier? What do you want? He has told us in one of his sermons what are the conditions of happiness. Blessed, he says, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Is that what we want? When we read the story of this Christ, spit upon, beaten, reviled, and answering not, we think we must admire it because it is the story of the Christ, and in church we do; but when, in public life, a man is abused and vilified, what is it that we like best — to see him suffer in silence and make no answer, or to see him write a keen letter to the newspaper and put his enemy to flight? "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," — on Sunday morning we believe in that, of course, because it is in the New Testament; but how about to-morrow? how about next week? how about struggling, grasping, energetic enterprising America? Who is it that we really believe gets the benefit of the earth? If we wrote our highest convictions, should we not write:

"Blessed are the enterprising and not over scrupulous, for they shall get the earth"? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Open the novel, go to the theatre, listen to the latest drama, and tell yourself whether, if what men to-day want in the realm of imagination be measured by what they buy and pay for, they really are eager for that which ministers only to purity of heart.

Faith in Christ is, first of all, this: Such as he was I want to be; his is the kind of life I want to live; his is the kind of character I want to possess; his is the kind of blessedness I desire for myself and for my children. A man may believe what creed he will, and if this is not in his heart, he has not faith in Christ. He may be baptized with holy water taken from the Jordan, blessed by the priest, bishop, archbishop, and Pope; and if this desire is not in his heart, he has no faith in Christ. He may have joined in succession all the churches in Christendom, from the Quaker meeting to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and if in his

heart there is not the faith that desires the lowliness of spirit which suffers long and is kind, the meekness which inherits the earth as a gift, the purity of heart which sees God, he has no faith in Christ. Faith in Christ cannot find its interpretation in any creed, however orthodox; it finds its interpretation in some hearts that do not understand nor accept any recognized orthodox creed.

But necessary to this salvation, this character, is not only a perception of the ideal, but an eager purpose to attain it. We do not make anything by dreaming: neither a building, nor an empire, nor an individual character. We cannot sit and sing ourselves away to everlasting bliss; we have to go out and fight our way to everlasting bliss. All life is a struggle. The seventh chapter of Romans comes before the eighth. A man must know the experience which cries out, "I do the things I would not do and I hate the things that I do," before he can cry out, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory!" No man can be free who does

not desire freedom; neither can any man be free who is not willing to suffer for freedom. The price of character is battle, as the price of every victory is battle. There must be not only the vision of this beautiful character, that comes on Sunday like a dissolving view, and on Sunday night, like a dissolving view, disappears again; there must be also this faith: That character is for me, I can be that kind of a person, and, God helping me, I will. The mere vision of a Christ, without the vigorous attempt to reproduce the Christ, is sentimentality in religion, and we are never saved by sentimentality. We are not religious because we go to church and heartily applaud an eloquent sermon, any more than we are religious because we heartily applaud beautiful music. Æstheticism is not spirituality. Life does not consist in seeing beautiful pictures, but in struggling toward a splendid result, and Jesus Christ has come not only to put before men this vision, but to put into the hearts of men this strong and strenuous endeavor.

But with this endeavor must be mingled hope, anticipation, expectation, otherwise the greater the endeavor the greater the despair. And Christ not only puts before us ideals of character to be pursued, not only incites within us an ambitious purpose to live his life and possess his character, but by his inspiring presence, by his overmastering personality confers on us the power to live that life and possess that character. If we ask ourselves what Christ meant by salvation, we have but to read the Gospel and see how he saved men when he was on the earth. He came to a tax-collector sitting at the receipt of customs, — all tax-collectors in that day were corrupt, — and he said to him, "Follow me!" and Matthew left his tax-collecting to follow the new life. He came to some fishermen, prosaic and common men, doing service in common ways, and he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men; I will give you a higher mission and a nobler opportunity," and they left their commonplace vocations to follow him. He came into Jericho,

and a corrupt politician of his time climbed a tree to look at him — a man at whom all men pointed the finger of scorn, the man whom all men hated — the Jewish "boss," who derived his power as a political leader, not from his own people, but from a despotic foreigner. To him Christ says, I will stay at your house to-night; and when he came, there was something in Christ that put such higher purpose into that man that the man said, "I have been dishonest, but I will restore fourfold to those from whom I stole, and as I cannot find them all I will give half of what is left to feed the poor." And Christ said, "Salvation is come unto this house." Salvation — why? Because change of character, new life, more than new vision — new purpose, more than new purpose — a purpose that costs something. When a man says, I will hunt out every man I have treated dishonestly and give him back with compound interest what I have taken, and then I will cut what is left of my fortune in two and give it half away — he has given better evidence of religion

than is generally given to examining committees in church.

This was the kind of salvation which, as we read the story of his life, we see that Jesus Christ commonly brought to men. But this was not all. After he had put this new motive, this new hope into men's hearts, he put into them the power to accomplish the purpose. One of his disciples was impetuous, impulsive, with no strength of will, no stability of character; one who cried, "Bid me to walk on the waves," but began to sink almost as soon as his feet touched the waves and changed his cry to "Save, Lord, save or I perish;" one who said to Christ, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will I not deny thee," and yet before three hours had passed had denied his Lord thrice with oaths. It was to him Christ said, "Thou art a rock, and on this rock will I build my church." Faith in Christ made of him a rock, and on men transformed as he was Christ has built his church. John we think of as the unworldly, unselfish, tender, loving disciple; but you remember that when James

and John first came to Jesus he called them "Boanerges, Sons of Thunder." It was John who said, when a Samaritan village refused to admit them, "Shall I call down fire from heaven to destroy this village?" It was James and John at the time of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem who with their mother came to ask that they might have the best places in the kingdom. And yet when John had been transformed by Christ he was preëminently the apostle of love, so that we are told that in his old age, when he could no longer preach, his disciples brought him in a chair to the churches and he repeated to the congregation simply, "Little children, love one another." Whether this be fact or not, it is true to his new character.

This is the kind of saving Christ did. He did not say to men, "You are going to hell, for you are wicked; but I will save you from hell if you will believe certain theories." He never stated theories. He said, "You are living a poor life; follow me and I will show you how to live a better life and enable you to live a better

life. Follow me and I will take the consciousness, the pride, the ambition, the instability, out of you, and will make you humble and unselfish and strong." This is what he did for men in his earthly ministry, and this is what he has been doing for men ever since his resurrection. He put a new ambition, a new heart, a new purpose, a new hope, into men. Men said, "We cannot;" he said, "You can." The very command of Christ ought to be inspiration. A father goes out in the hill country to walk with his boys, and while they stop to pluck flowers and play, the father goes steadily up the hill, and by and by he appears far above on an out-jutting crag, and calls "Follow me!" The children look up. How shall they follow him? how climb that great, steep precipice? But still the father calls, "Follow me!" And one says to himself and to his companions, "Father would not tell us to follow him if we could not follow. I do not know the way and I do not see how we can take it, but I will start, because if father says 'Follow me,' I know I can

follow him and where he stands I can yet stand." So when Christ, our Heavenly Master, looks out of heaven and says to us, "Follow me," I know, because he commands it, that I can; when he says, "Be like me," I know, because he says it, that I can. Christ like ordinary men? No; but ordinary men can become like Christ. This bit of clay on the potter's table like this beautiful vase? No; but this bit of clay on the potter's table, if it submits itself long enough to the hands that are framing it and to the skill that is working on it, will become like that vase upon the shelf. There are some of you here this morning who say, I can never become like Christ. You can. I am prosaic and commonplace; these visions are not for me. Are you more prosaic than Matthew? I am ambitious and cannot keep my ambition under control. Are you more ambitious than James and John, who came to Christ in the very hour before his Passion, seeking the best places in the coming kingdom? I am proud. Is your pride greater than that of Paul, the Pharisee? I am in de-

spair; all men despise me; I have sinned away my opportunity; for me there is no chance. Is your despair greater than that of the woman to whom Christ said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go in peace"? I am superstitious, brought up under a bad creed. I have thrown it away and have nothing else; for me there is no chance; if only I had had Christian parents, your education, the liberty of the Gospel when I was a boy! Were you brought up in a more superstitious atmosphere, under a worse creed, under more disadvantageous circumstances than Luther, the emancipator of Europe? I have an appetite which masters me; I eat the things I know I ought not to eat, and I drink the things I know I ought not to drink. There is no chance for me. Are you worse off than John B. Gough, the victim of delirium tremens, rescued by the power and the hopefulness of Jesus Christ?

In the old Anglo-Saxon Bible the word rendered in our English Bible "Saviour" is said to be rendered "Helper." I have sometimes almost wished that we had had

in place of the Latin word "Saviour" that plainer, simpler Anglo-Saxon word "Helper." Christ's saving is helping and Christ's helping is saving. Independence is a much praised word in America, but there is no such thing as independence. No nation is independent of any other nation; no community of other communities; no individual of other individuals. We are knit together and depend on one another, not merely for the material comforts for the outer life, but for the inner life as well. The child is born into the family and is dependent upon the father and mother for the beginnings of life. He goes into school and becomes dependent upon his teachers, and yet more on his companions, for such life as they can impart to him. He learns from their examples, he imbibes their spirit. He goes into business, and not only from the partners who are working with him in the store, but from the rivals who are competing with him outside, he learns. He marries, and his wife imparts life to him and he imparts life to his wife, each dependent

upon the other. Children come and they in turn become his teachers and his life-givers. The mothers here know that! Nothing that they have yet given to their children can compare with what their children have given to them. Our children are our great teachers, our great ministers, for something of God's own life looks out of their strange and mystic eyes. So we go on giving our life to one another, helping or hindering one another in our highest development. And above all and inspiring us all is the great Help-Giver — Christ.

We make a great mistake and we do not understand the foundation of our Christian faith, if we regard Christ's life as spent in Palestine and lasting only three short years. The very basis of our Christian discipleship is this: That he rose from the dead, is living, and that here to-day he is doing for us what he did for those of the olden time. He is still here, still pouring into his followers the treasures of his illimitable life. The question is not, What can you do? but, What can you and

God together do? Not, What can you do apart from him to win your way to his favor? but, What can you do as the recipient of his favor? Christ in us is the hope of our glory.

This is the foundation, the heart, the life of our life. He is still here, and all that he says we can do — we can do because he can do it in us and for us. This is prayer. It is opening our heart to the heart of God, laying our hands in the hand of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and asking and receiving life! So that we can live in poverty or in wealth, in sorrow or in joy, so that we know both how to be abased and how to abound, so that we also can say as Paul said, "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me."

Thus far I have been considering the question, How does Christ save us? How are we to avail ourselves of this salvation: this ideal of life, this inspiration to life? We make a great mistake if we suppose, as we often do, that we are to try ourselves to build up our own char-

acter. To be saved is to attain Christlikeness in life and character, and to do this I am to do the work that God gives me to do, and am to leave to God the making of my character. Let me illustrate. I am sick — a little cold, nothing serious, as it seems to me. I call the doctor, who tells me to go to bed, and to bed I go. He says, "To-night eat only gruel," and gruel I eat, although I would rather have beef-steak. If now I begin to worry about myself, if I ask, "What do you find my pulse to be? What my temperature? What is the matter with me? Am I going to be very sick?" the doctor will laugh at me, or he will change the topic, or sharply forbid the questioning, or possibly even deceive me. No doctor wants a patient to try to cure himself. If a patient begins to study his own symptoms, that he may help cure himself, one of two things happens: either he thinks, "I am not sick at all," or else he thinks, "I am very sick," and in either case the doctor's difficulties are increased. Is the best type of pupil in a school the

pupil who is inquiring what her courses are to be, what her marks are, what kind of scholar she is, and whether she is doing her work in the best way; or the pupil who takes the work given her to do and does it faithfully and well, leaving the shaping of the curriculum and the formation of the courses and the general working out of results to her teacher? Which is the kind of pupil of whom it is easiest to make a scholar?

What I understand Christ to say to us is this: "Do not trouble yourself about yourself. Leave yourself to me. I will take care of you; do you simply take care of your duty. Do you say to me, I am very vain? I will carry you through experience to take the vanity out of you. Do you say, I am very selfish? Seek for the opportunity to render service, render the service, but leave me to carry you through experiences that will take the selfishness out of you. If you are selfish I will put another's burden on you and make you bear it, and in the bearing of another's burden you will learn unselfish-

ness." I am not to set myself to make a better man of myself. My work is to be done without regard to myself, for the sake of loyalty to Christ. One of the most common and serious obstacles to salvation, that is, to the natural and healthful development of Christlikeness of character, is the pernicious habit of self-examination. The very passages often quoted from the Bible in support of this habit do really forbid it. "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, look well if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." What does that mean? Does it counsel me to search my own heart and see if there be any wicked way in me, and then the Lord will lead me in the way everlasting? No. I do not know myself and cannot comprehend myself, and cannot search myself. If I come in the spirit of this text, I shall say to him, "Do you search me, do you try me, do you see if there be any wicked way in me. I want you to know it all. Then put me through such discipline in life as

will make me a better man. I will go where you lead, I will do what you tell me to do, but I will leave the examination to you." The Armenians have a saying, "No camel ever sees his own hump." No one ever knows the evils that are in himself. I do not want to know the evils that are in me; they would dishearten me. But I want God to know them all, and I want to leave God to cure them all. If I will, day by day, take care of my duty he will take care of my character.

"With me," says Paul, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not thereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord."[1] If I examine myself and conclude as the result of that examination that I have done nothing wrong, nothing that I need be ashamed of, that does not satisfy me. I do not know. And if I say, "I am all wrong and must be made

[1] I Corinthians iv. 3, 4. Revised Version.

all over again," that certainly does not satisfy me. And neither result helps me to be better. So I put it all behind me, take myself as I am, and say to him, "Though I am as wavering as Peter, as ambitious as John, as dishonest as Zaccheus, as proud as Paul, as resolutely sceptical as Thomas, I put myself in your hands just as I am. If you will tell me what to do, not to make myself a good man, — that I am not engaged to do, — but what to do to help other people, what love to other men and women calls on me to do, I will honestly try to do it, and will leave you to make what you can out of such a man as I am."

This little contribution to spiritual experience would be sadly defective if it did not at least recognize a truth which cannot be here more than merely recognized: the fact that life-giving involves sacrifice.

When a young girl graduates from college, and says, "I am going to teach," she fancies, notwithstanding her own college experience, that all the pupils will welcome her instruction and look upon

her as a benefactor. When the babe is laid in the mother's arms, the mother, notwithstanding the experience of other mothers, says, "This dear child will repay my love with love, and my service with gratitude." The great leader is gradually, by no force of his own, pushed up to take a position of leadership; and he thinks that the men who follow will rejoice and applaud and thank him for his leadership. But when the teacher goes to her school-room she finds her scholars resisting her influence; when the mother sees her child growing up from the nursery into the school, she finds herself called some day by the little boy "the old woman," and her own love ill paid in ingratitude and carelessness; the leader is stoned and abused by the very men who follow him, and do not know that they are following him.

It costs something to give life. And the great God above us—it has cost him something to give his life. It has cost him his Son; or, if we transfer the figure, it has cost the Son the crown of thorns

and the cross and all the Passion to give himself. He is the example — showing what we may be; he is hope — inspiring us with the ambition to be; he is still with us, pouring his life unto us; he is the great sufferer and the great self-sacrificer — pouring out his life-blood that he may give his life-blood to us.

There are those who are satisfied with their present life, who are content with the life they have lived, and with the life they are living, and with the character they have attained; for such the Gospel has no message. But for those who are not satisfied with the life that they have lived, who are not satisfied with the character they have attained, who want to be better than they are, more than they are, larger than they are, richer in character than they are; for those who see this life of Christ and say, "I wish I had the power to live that kind of life and be that kind of man," for those the message of the Gospel is: The Christ who has shown you the pattern inspires you with the hope, pours into you the life, and, still crowned

with thorns, waits for the time when he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, because you have awakened in his likeness, and see him as he is, because you are like him. Then, but not till then, shall we know what salvation really means.

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